

John 5:46

ON THE
SCRIPTURES,

&c. &c.



SCOTTISH HISTORIES

ON THE
SCRIPTURES,

BEING

A VIEW OF THE TRUTH AND IMPORTANCE OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND OF THE UNITY OF
DESIGN AND HARMONY OF DOCTRINE
IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

INTENDED

TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THE
ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE VISITATION OF THE
ARCHDEACON OF STAFFORD.

By WILLIAM JESSE, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE EARL OF GLASGOW.

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SCRIPTURES

EDITION

A VIEW OF THE TURKISH AND MONGOLIC KINGDOMS
IN ASIA, WITH A HISTORY OF
THEIR CIVILIZATION, AND OF
THEIR INFLUENCE ON
THEIR NEIGHBOURS.
BY J. C. DODGE, M.A.



WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING A HISTORY OF
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CHARLES HARRIS, LONDON: 1829.

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PREFACE.

To excite attention to the Holy Scriptures ; to persuade the mere English Scholar to study them in the English version ; to encourage the hope of acquiring, by the diligent use of a translation, all the general and most important advantages which the original Scriptures were designed to communicate ; to assist the Student in searching the Scriptures ; and, to point out the best method of studying them—these are the ends proposed, in offering this work to the acceptance of THE ENGLISH READER.

The Author is not guilty of the presumption of offering his advice, or assistance, to his Superiors ; to those who with greater abilities, are searching the original Scriptures ; who understand the right use of the *Fathers* ; and, who can avail themselves of all the learned lore, which, since the Fathers fell asleep, the *Critici Sacri* have collected and deposited in their well-stored hives. But, he presumes to suggest to their

a consideration

consideration, Whether the *Method* of studying the Scriptures, recommended in the eighteenth chapter of this work, be not as necessary to the learned as to the unlearned; to those who read the Hebrew and Greek texts, as to those who can read the Scriptures in no other language than in their own mother-tongue.

Those whom he had first and principally in view were laymen, *πάντες οἱ βιωτικοὶ*², whose learning, employments, and commerce in the world, are secular; and who cannot read any book which is not written in the English language. There are, however, those of the clerical order, to whom, the Author hopes, he may offer this work without seeming to take an undue liberty.

The very best foundation, for the pursuit of polite literature, is laid in our public schools; and many of the English Clergy excel in this kind of learning. But, though a classical education be equally advantageous to the study of theology, yet, it must be confessed, there is not sufficient care taken to train the English Clergy for the work of the ministry, in any course of

preparatory

² Αὐταῖς παρακαλῶ πάντες οἱ βιωτικοὶ, καὶ κτασθε βιέναι
φαμανα ψυχής.

CHRYS.

preparatory studies and discipline *appropriate* or *peculiar* to the sacred office. The study of theology is almost totally neglected; and, many take orders before they have acquired even the lowest degree of professional abilities^b. There are public teachers in the established Church, and in the congregations of Dissenters, who are not sufficiently acquainted with the Hebrew and Greek tongues, to read and study the Scriptures in the languages in which they were originally written. There are some, who are scarcely able to read the Greek of the New Testament, or even the easy Greek of St. John's Gospel.

When these enter upon their cures, it may be presumed, they then begin to be sensible of the essential defect in their education, and sincerely regret they have then to begin to learn, when it is their office to teach. And, may it not be hoped, they

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^b Three or four years wholly devoted to theological studies would not be too much time, to qualify those who have already acquired a competent knowledge of the learned languages, and a good share of general science. And, it would be happy, if, during this time devoted to theological studies, the utmost care were taken, to form the views, the spirit, the temper, the character, which should distinguish Christian ministers more than their habit, and even more than their learning.

would set themselves in good earnest to acquire that degree of theological learning, which is necessary to render their services profitable to their parishioners, if they had any probable prospect of success? But, alas! the difficulties, which present themselves, are formidable enough to preclude this hope.

Their knowledge of the Latin tongue, perhaps, is not sufficient to enable them to read *Cyprian*, *Lactantius*, *Augustine*, nor even to consult *Poole's Synopsis*. Their knowledge of Greek may be still more defective. And, they naturally imagine, that they must obtain a considerable degree of critical skill, or knowledge of this language, by a long and intimate acquaintance with profane authors, before they shall be qualified to study and interpret the Greek Testament. This, of itself, is discouragement enough, without taking into consideration the Hebrew Bible, the voluminous works of the Fathers, and of the Schoolmen, ecclesiastical and profane histories, chronology, rhetoric, bodies of divinity, comments and annotations, controversial writings of Romanists and Protestants, of Churchmen and Dissenters; all of which seem to be more

or

or less necessary to form a good Divine. And, that man must possess a prodigious degree of vigor in body and mind, and be inspired with an uncommon ardor in the pursuit of Truth, and with a very extraordinary zeal for the interests of religion, who, after three or four and twenty years of age, perhaps of idleness and dissipation, will dare to begin to study in hope of surmounting such mighty obstacles. And, therefore, it is not to be wondered at, if ninety-nine out of an hundred fit down in despair, and yield to the natural reluctance we feel to labour, and to that love of ease which the human nature is prone to indulge^c.

To relieve ingenuous minds from this despair of success, by pointing out a more easy, though inferior, method of studying

^c Young men, who have not acquired a taste for classic authors at school, and have not so much as surmounted the difficulties of Greek and Latin, very rarely pursue classical studies in the Universities, or ever look into a classical author after they have quitted those seats of learning. How then can it be expected, when they are reposed within the bosom of the Church, that, without a tutor, and without an urgent stimulus, they will voluntary submit to the drudgery of learning the Greek language, and task themselves to construe, or to read, Homer, Zenophon, and other Greek authors, in hope of being able, at some distant period, to read the Greek testament with a critical eye?

the Scriptures, compatible with their abilities who have no acquaintance with the Hebrew tongue, and who cannot read the Greek Testament, or but very imperfectly, is one part of the Author's design. The following supposed case will illustrate, and, it is hoped, will justify his plan.

If any gentleman of an humane disposition, and possessing some skill in the art of husbandry, were to go into a remote part of the kingdom, where the lands, in general, remain in a low state of cultivation—were he to see the children of one of the farmers ill clothed, and sickly through want of a sufficient quantity of nourishing food; and a sad gloom upon the countenances of their parents, in prospect of their landlord's demands, and in consciousness of their own inability to answer them—*nam ita se res habet; vix vitam per aspera ducant*—did he observe that the farm was not naturally barren, but unproductive through mismanagement, or want of skill in the cultivation of the lands; and, that the farmer himself was indolent and inactive, not through disease, or natural weakness, or grossness of habit, but merely through dispiritedness, despairing of better success—he

he would consider by what means this wretched family might be redeemed from its miserable circumstances. It would be to no good purpose, if this gentleman described the drill plough, and other expensive implements of husbandry, and the higher methods of cultivation recommended by the Agricultural Societies ; because the very confined abilities of this farmer could not reach to the purchase and use of those implements, and to the practice of these methods of cultivation, which require a large capital to be put into execution.

But, if he were to point out a method of draining some parts of the farm with very little more cost than that of manual labour ; if he were to shew the farmer a stratum of marl on the premises, or a bed of chalk of which he might easily make lime, either of which laid upon his lands would increase the produce of his corn-fields ; if he were to instruct him to change his crops with advantage, and to improve his live stock by slow, but certain, degrees ; if he could encourage the farmer, and excite him to be cheerful, active, and industrious, by the animating hope of maintaining his family comfortably, and of paying his rents to the

full satisfaction of his landlord's demands ; he would certainly render an essential service to this family, and probably to many others in the neighbourhood by this farmer's example. And, surely, no one will be so absurd as to say, This gentleman has not given the farmer the best advice, nor recommended the best method of cultivation ; much less would any one charge him with contempt of all the wisdom which philosophy and experience have taught the Agricultural Societies. It is praise enough to say, He has given good advice, and taught as good a method of husbandry as the circumstances of the farmer would permit to be put into practice. And, in truth, the method, which, in other places, and for farmers differently circumstanced, would be the best, here, in this farmer's situation, would be the very worst ; because it is quite beyond his reach : the very description of it would remind him of his property, and would sink him deeper in despair.

By asserting the sufficiency of the English Scriptures, to make any one wise unto salvation, the Author does not mean to deny the advantage of other accessory means of information.

information⁴. He that becomes wise unto salvation, by reading the Scriptures, must confess that he is indebted to the instruction of his parents, or to the conversation and example of his neighbours and acquaintance : he has derived some assistance from the diffused light of Revelation, which shines upon every one sojourning in a Christian country ; and, he owes much to the preachers of Christianity. Without these he would never have known the Holy Scriptures : without these, probably, he would never have paid any serious regard to them, as containing the WORD OF GOD : without these, he would never have discerned the right method of studying the Scriptures ; never have discerned the plan of God's merciful providence ; never have felt his

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⁴ When St. Paul told Timotheus that the Old-testament Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation, he could not mean to attribute this power to the holy Scriptures without the aid of a divine blessing, or the influence of the divine Spirit, accompanying the studious reading the Scriptures. It is not to be imagined that St. Paul meant to exclude the advan-

tage which might be derived from those miraculous gifts imparted for the edification of the Church ; nor to exclude from the idea of the sufficiency of the Scriptures the gift of prophecy ; but plainly included this gift, as necessary to make the Scriptures effectual, by adding through faith which is in Christ Jesus, for faith comes by hearing. See 1 Tim. iv. 14.

own immense obligations to the Divine mercy: or, under the influence of a prejudiced mind, and through the bias of a wicked heart, and bad habits, he would, without these concomitant aids, have studied the Scriptures, if he studied them at all, for no other end than to pervert their meaning, to justify his prejudices, and to countenance his corrupt practices.

And, by asserting the sufficiency of the English Scriptures, to accomplish the man of God for the work of the ministry, the author does not deny the superior advantage of studying the Scriptures in the languages in which they were originally written. He thinks that the Hebrew and Greek tongues, especially the former, ought to be considered as a very important part of a clerical education, and to be studied by every one who devotes himself to the ministry, if he have sufficient abilities and opportunity. But, considering that the doctrines of Revelation are doctrines of facts, or which result from the history of facts recorded in the Bible; and, which are there represented by sacramental emblems, by significant types and examples; and, considering that the true understanding the Scriptures depends far less

less upon verbal criticisms than on studying the *dispensations* of God, of which the Scriptures contain an authentic and plain history, and which are clearly expressed in every translation of the Bible—in this view of things, he is persuaded that the English Bible is sufficient for all the general and most important purposes, for which the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God; and, therefore, sufficient to furnish every one, possessing other requisite talents, who will carefully study the sacred volume, with that competent knowledge of the mind and will of God, by which he shall be qualified to instruct the ignorant, and to direct and animate sincere Christians.

An earnest desire, not to be misunderstood, inclines the author to declare more explicitly, that it is no part of his design, in this work, to encourage idleness and a rash intrusion of unqualified persons into the sacred office. He insists that no degree of piety is sufficient of itself to qualify any one to become a public minister of the Word. In the primitive Church, all were holy; but, they were not all Apostles; they were not all teachers. He insists that they, who would instruct, must first learn; must be scholars

scholars before they can be teachers. Without learning, without being able to interpret the Scriptures, they may declaim, but they cannot *preach*: they may move their audiences, by an uncertain sound of words; but cannot lead them; cannot edify them; cannot establish them in sound doctrine and solid experience. And, he insists that a superficial knowledge of the Scriptures, though accompanied with much serious piety, is not a sufficient qualification. He that would be an useful minister of Jesus Christ must *give attendance to reading*: he must search the Scriptures: he must study them; and study them diligently; and inwardly digest the word of life by meditation day and night. He must be able to expound the Scriptures, and to give the sense: he must obtain a faculty of speaking to the understanding of his hearers, and a skill in dividing the word aright, and a wisdom and prudence in applying it to the circumstances, the experience, and practices of his audience. To obtain this qualification, the utmost diligence is necessary; and, when exerted to the utmost, we shall still find that our attainments are small in comparison of what is yet unattained.

No

No one can have a deeper sense of the presumption of unlearned men, intruding into the sacred office, than the writer of this preface. The mischiefs, which have been the consequence of this intrusion, are incalculable, and cannot be compensated by any accidental or partial good. And, it is in vain, that any of this description pretend to have been qualified by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, without study or the ordinary means of learning. There is no such inspiration as that of which they dream, and of which some are too apt to boast. It does not appear, that even the Apostles were favoured with any such inspiration; an inspiration that supersedes the necessity and advantage of learning.

This strong opinion of the importance of Learning is not inconsistent with the Author's design in recommending the study of the English Bible, as a sufficient means to furnish competent abilities for the office of a public teacher of Christianity. They, who think Learning consists in the knowledge of languages, or that the Latin and Greek tongues are indispensably necessary to the acquisition of Learning, are as much mistaken,

taken, as they are, who despise human Learning as altogether useless.

When we talk of Learning, we surely mean something more than the knowledge of words, that is, of sounds, and the ideas of things to which they correspond ; for, even ideots will learn these : and, to know that *Equus* in Latin, and *Ιππος* in Greek, signify the same as *Horse* in English, is not what we mean by *Learning* ; for Wisdom is always implied in this term. Latin and Greek, and an ability to read and translate any thing written in these languages, are Instruments of Learning, and not Learning itself. Yet, we usually compliment those who are versed in these languages with the title of *Learned Men* ; not because they can read and translate authors who have written in Latin and Greek ; but, principally, because it is presumed they could not have attained to this skill without improvement of the mind, nor without acquiring the knowledge of whatever is useful in the books which they have read. Separate from this improvement of the mind in the acquisition of wisdom, a man is not more learned, and no more deserves the character of a learned man, for knowing all the words,

and

and phrases, and forms of speech, in Latin and Greek, than he would have been, if he had been equally skilled in the Earse language, or in that of the Aborigines of Greenland.

And, may not any one become a learned man who is utterly ignorant of Latin and Greek? Is all useful knowledge shut up in these languages? Are there not other means of information, other sources of wisdom, in other languages? For example, in the French, German, and English languages? Are there not many more English scholars, learned in the mathematics, in geography, astronomy, in history, politics, law, and physic? And, why not in divinity?

Truly,

e It has been doubted and disputed whether Shakespeare was a classic scholar; that is, whether he derived his knowledge from original authors, or from translations. It has been at length determined, that he had such a very slight acquaintance with the Latin tongue as to be incapable of drawing his information from original authors; and, that he got all his learning from translations. And, if Shakespeare could be so learned by the use of translations, and such as

would now be called wretched translations, that it could become questionable whether he were a classic scholar, or not, shall we think it impossible to acquire learning by the study of English books, or to acquire theological learning by the use of the English Bible.

“ Our Shakespeare was, I
“ think, the first that broke
“ through this bondage of
“ classical superstition. And
“ he owed this felicity, as he
“ did some others, to his want
“ of what is called The ad-

“ vantage

Truly, it may endanger the censure of prejudice, but the author will hazard the assertion, that there is more various information, more useful knowledge contained in books in the English language, than in all the books now extant in the world, written by classic authors in Latin and Greek. And this he asserts with no degree of contempt of classical erudition, but to justify his opinion that a mere English scholar may attain to a degree of theological learning in the use of the English Bible, not excluding the use of other English books ; and may become a respectable and useful minister, though he fall short of that degree of learning which is necessary to give a lustre to his profession.

If any one object the importance of critical

" vantage of a learned edu-
" cation." HURD.

" As to his want of learning,
" it may be necessary to say
" something more. There is
" certainly a vast difference be-
" tween *learning* and *languages*.
" How far he was ignorant of
" the latter, I cannot deter-
" mine; but it is plain he had
" much reading at least, if you
" will not call it learning. Nor
" is it any great matter if a man

" has knowledge, whether he has
" it from one language or from
" another. Nothing is more
" evident than that he had a
" taste of natural philosophy,
" mechanics, ancient and mo-
" dern history, poetical learn-
" ing, and mythology: we
" find him very knowing in
" the customs, rites, and man-
" ners of antiquity, &c.

POPE.

tical learning, to correct the imperfections of a translation, and to decide upon the meaning of a controverted text of Scripture, the Author is willing to allow the advantage of this kind of learning. But, he would remark, that it cannot be brought into general use in the discharge of the ministerial function ; and, that the Apostles of Jesus Christ have never once condescended in all their writings to the minutiae of verbal criticism. It may be said, they had not learning sufficient for critical investigation. This *may* be said ; but, probably, without sufficient evidence of the truth of the assertion. And, there is this to contradict it ; The Apostles, though they usually quoted from the Greek version of the Bible, have sometimes, when it was more to their purpose, given their quotations by translating the Hebrew text. They interpreted the Scriptures on a broader scale than verbal criticism. They laid open the richest veins of gold, and led their pupils to inexhaustible treasures of wisdom. Compared with their method of interpreting the Scriptures, verbal critics are sometimes idly employed in picking gold off gingerbread, and, at best, with infinite labour, are separating

minute particles of the precious metal from heterogeneous matter, from earth and sand, which, in the lapse of ages, have been washed down together from those everlasting hills which contain the richest mines of native ore.

Whoever shall attentively consider the method of studying the Scriptures, recommended in the xviiith chapter of this work, will never accuse the Author of encouraging an idle and superficial application to the study of theology. It is Learning, real Learning, and that the most important that ever engaged the mind of man, which he wishes to encourage ; and, he wishes to encourage the pursuit of it with ardour and unwearied application. And, in addition to what will be found in the body of this work, he will take the liberty to recommend to the English student a course of preparatory study.

He would recommend to the mere English student, as the ground-work of his learning, that he perfect himself in the English language by studying *Lowth's English Grammar*. This is necessary, not only that he may speak with propriety and more intelligibly, when he shall afterwards

wards commence a public teacher of God's word; but, that he himself may the more clearly apprehend the meaning of what he reads in the English Bible, or in any other book.

Eloquence is not a gift of nature, though the faculties by which it is exercised are; and no one can be so mad as to pretend to the gift of tongues, or to the art of speaking well, by inspiration. He might with equal truth pretend that he learned to read, and spell, and write, by inspiration. It is an art, or skill, obtained by self-exertions, by study and exercise: and, for this reason, Lowth's Grammar is recommended in the first place, because if we cannot speak with propriety, we cannot speak very intelligibly: we shall be very imperfectly understood by one part of our audiences, and the other part will be disgusted by our manner of speaking. It is necessary to speak intelligibly, in order *to commend the truth* to every man's conscience, and to *persuade* our hearers; for, in these two points, conviction and persuasion, the art of speaking well, or what is called Eloquence, principally consists.

After the English student shall have stu-
b 2 died

died Lowth's Grammar, let him read *Watts on the Improvement of the Mind*; *Watts' Logic*; after this, *Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric*; *Rollin's Ancient History*; *Prideaux's Connection of profane and sacred History*; and, *Jenkin on the Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion*. There are many other English books, which he may read, or which he may consult occasionally, with great advantage. But, these which have been mentioned are sufficient, as a necessary assistance to his studying the Scriptures in the method proposed in the xviiiith chapter of this work. And, lastly, *Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*^f is recommended to his careful attention before he venture upon the exercises of the pulpit.

The same course of study is recommended to those who are but very imperfectly acquainted with the Greek language, unless they have gone through a similar course; especially if they cannot speak and write their mother-tongue correctly. And, let them

^f Lately republished, in English, by the Rev. C. Simeon of King's College, Cambridge. To those who have undertaken the cure of souls, the author

would recommend *Burnet's Pastoral Care*; and, *Ellis on the Knowledge of divine Things from Revelation*.

them not despair of improving their acquaintance with the Greek tongue, however imperfectly they understood it when they left school. With the assistance of Parkhurst's *plain and easy Greek Grammar, adapted to the use of Learners, and of those who understand no other Language than English*; and by the use of his *Greek and English Lexicon*, both bound together; and by reading a portion of the Greek Testament daily, they will soon find the advantage in the improvement of their professional abilities.

When they have read the Greek Testament, and it is become easy to them, let them begin to read the LXX Greek version of the Old Testament. This is the same kind of Greek as that in which the New Testament is written, that is, Hellenistic Greek, Greek declined from the purity of the language as spoken by native Greeks, and as written by classic authors; and, into which foreign words, and the idioms of other languages, have been introduced. There is less probability of learning to construe the New Testament, by consulting the purest Greek authors, than by recourse to the Septuagint.

But, let not the Greek scholar, however perfect he may be in Greek, boast his superior advantage above the mere English student. He has only one step of advantage above him; and that, not a very high one: nor even this, unless his knowledge of Greek secure to him a more perfect rendering of the text of the Greek Testament than our translators had given to the public. He may be able to correct the English version in some instances where it is obscure and faulty; but, what shall secure him from correcting where there is no fault, and from approving in some instances where he ought to condemn? To give him a decided superiority above the mere English reader, his knowledge of the Greek tongue must so far secure him from mistaking the text, as to insure to him a translation, which, upon the whole, shall more perfectly correspond with the original than our present version; that is, he must be a more accomplished scholar, a sounder critic, and less liable to err, than those venerable persons, who, with all their united skill, and wisdom, and industry, were the authors of our English authorized translation.

But, supposing this; yet, it should be considered

considered that the rendering of the Greek Testament, and the interpretation of its meaning, do not *wholly* depend upon critical skill in the Greek language. And, after all, this critical skill in the Greek language will not place any one above the level of a mere English scholar in regard to the larger, and not least important, part of the Holy Scriptures. Three fourths of the whole Bible were not written in Greek, but in Hebrew; and this larger part of the Bible cannot be better understood by reading the New Testament in Greek than in English, nor by reading the Septuagint version than by reading the Spanish translation, or the High Dutch; unless it can be proved that the Septuagint comes nearer to the Hebrew, which no one, I think, will attempt to prove. And, supposing the Old Testament was translated into Greek, in the reign of Ptolemy, by seventy Jews; and, that the Greek version of the Old Testament, which now goes under the name of *the Septuagint*, is an exact copy of that translation, it would have no more *authority* to determine the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures, than our English version: First, because those Jews were fallible and prejudiced

diced men; Secondly, because the translation itself, in many instances, exhibits them in the character of interpreters, or paraphraasts, rather than as faithful translators; Thirdly, because, at the time, when this translation is supposed to have been made, the Jews were fallen into great ignorance of the true meaning of the Scriptures, and into that fanciful method of interpreting them which at last completed their apostacy; and, Fourthly, because this translation hath in it “many gross errors, “ absurdity, and incongruity of words and “ phrases, and differs much from the Hebrew verity.”

It

Supposing the Greek Bible work, could produce, *i. e.* a to be a translation made by command of Ptolemy, and that it was an exact translation of the then existing Hebrew text; and, that what we now have is a true copy of that translation; it would be of great use in correcting the errors which may since have crept into the Hebrew text, and in settling the choice of various readings, or any things doubtful or disputed in the Hebrew copy: and, even if it were not an exact translation, but as good as the Jews, employed in the

faithful translation to the best of their judgment, it would teach us the meaning which the Jews put upon the original text; and, even if it were corrupted in the length of time, or otherwise, it would be of some use to learned men in forming *probable conjectures* concerning the Hebrew text, where any thing is doubtful. But, the reader may use his own judgment, when he shall have considered the following opinions of learned men, concerning this translation: that

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It has been thought that prophane literature is a necessary qualification of a Clergyman; and that he must be well versed in Latin and Greek, to enable him to read ecclesiastical

five Elders transcribed the Law for Ptolemy; that is, say some, they wrote it in Greek characters; others, that they translated it into the Greek language: that LXXII Elders, separated in so many cells, *wrote out* for Ptolemy the Law by itself; and, that they changed thirteen places designedly: others say, the LXXII Elders, in different cells, without any communication with each other, *translated* the Law into Greek, and every one of them miraculously produced exactly the same translation: that the other parts of the Bible were translated afterwards, by whom, or when, or where, nobody knows; though probably it was done by command of the great Synagogue, or the Sanhedrim: that the Jews translated the Scriptures very reluctantly, compelled by authority of the king of Egypt; and afterwards extended the translation beyond the Pentateuch to the other sacred books, compelled, by the necessity of

their circumstances, to satisfy the nations, among whom they were disposed, that there was nothing in the Law, or religion, or customs of the Jews, inimical to the peace of their kingdoms: that the Law was not translated for the use of the Jews, but of the heathen, for the purposes last mentioned: that in their translation they accommodated the Scriptures as much as they could to the opinions and prejudices of the heathen, and so as to conceal the mysteries of their own faith and religion: that, of all the various copies and editions of this version now extant, that copy is not to be esteemed the most genuine, which comes nearest to the Hebrew text, but that which comes nearest to the cautious designs of the translators: that Origen acknowledged a great difference between the Greek and Hebrew copies; and, that the Greek translation was so corrupt in Jerom's time, that he rather chose to make a new translation than correct the old

ecclesiastical authors, who have written in these languages, and to qualify him to understand, and expound, and vindicate the sacred Scriptures. It seems to have been taken for granted, that no one is fit to be a clergyman who cannot read the New Testament in the original language. The Author affents to these opinions in a limited degree. The particular circumstances of the times have made a very considerable share of this kind of learning highly expedient. But, if it be necessary to read the New Testament in the original language, it is equally necessary, and, in the opinion of

the

old one : that, the Greek was so faulty, some are of opinion, there are no remains of that old edition ; and others, that it hath been preserved to our time, though very imperfect and defective : and lastly, that St. Luke particularly in his Gospel and the Acts, quoted from the Greek translation, because he wrote for the information of Gentile converts, who did not understand Hebrew, and because the Greek translation was dispersed among the Gentiles ; and, for the like reason, the Apostles quoted from the Greek version, or gave the sense of the passages, to which they referred, in Greek ; and, if they had not done so, their frequent allegations out of the Law and the Prophets could not have been examined by the Gentiles and the Hellenistic Jews, and would have been utterly in vain. But, in doing this, the Evangelists and Apostles did not sanction the Greek translation, nor give any authority to it, farther than as it expressed so much of the original as served their purpose in quoting from it, that is, their quotations were designed simply as a reference to the dictates of inspiration, which every one knew were written by the Hebrew Prophets.

the writer, *more necessary*, to be able to read the Old Testament in the original, that is, in Hebrew—because the Old Testament, which is the larger part of the Bible, was written in this language; because it is impossible that any literal translation of the Scriptures should express the full sense and meaning, and particularly the *spiritual* sense and meaning, of the Hebrew; and further, because the New Testament stands upon the foundation of the Old; because the writers of the New Testament appeal to the Old, to justify every one of their doctrines, which seems to imply a prior and superior authority in the Old-testament Scriptures; and, because there is no part of the New Testament, not a book, scarcely a chapter, nor an argument, in which there is not, either a direct reference, or an allusion, to the Old-testament Scriptures.

The Reader will see, in this work, the high opinion, which the Author entertains of the Importance of the Old Testament, of the necessity of studying the Old Testament in order to understand the New. He will then conceive with what joyful hope the Author contemplates the increasing appearance of attention to the study of the

Hebrew

Hebrew Scriptures ; and, with what sincere satisfaction he heard, that one of our right reverend Prelates, the Patron of sacred literature, has held out, to those who devote themselves to the service of the Church, an encouragement to study the Hebrew language. And, upon occasion of mentioning this, as well as in conformity with the principal design of this preface, the Author cannot refrain from recommending to every one that wishes to be qualified for the office of a public teacher in the Church, to mere English students, as well as to those who have had the advantage of a classic education, to furnish themselves with a Hebrew Bible and Mr. Parkhurst's last edition of *The Hebrew and English Lexicon*, containing a *Grammar* of the Hebrew tongue. And, for further encouragement of students, he adds what Mr. Parkhurst has said in a preface to his Lexicon, after describing the method in which a student should proceed,

“ I can venture to assure any person of
“ tolerable parts and abilities, that an ap-
“ plication, *thus directed*, of two or three
“ hours every day to the Hebrew language,
“ *unadulterated with the Rabbinical points*,
“ will, *in a few months*, enable him to read
“ in

“ in the original, with ease and delight,
“ most parts of those *Holy Scriptures*, all of
“ which, St. Paul assures us, were given by
“ inspiration of God, and are able to make
“ us wise unto salvation through faith,
“ which is in Jesus Christ.”

The Apostles of Jesus Christ have pointed out to us the true method of preaching by their own example, which consisted in declaring the doctrines of Christ *in their agreement* with the Old-testament Scriptures; that is, by expounding the Law and the Prophets, saying, Thus it is written, and, Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, &c. This method was pursued by their successors.—It was not till the close of the first century, that the writings of the Apostles began to be sought after and collected; nor till the middle of the second century that they began to be dispersed in a volume; and it could not be sooner than towards the end of this century that they were generally known and received in the Churches. And, all this while, the Church acknowledged and appealed to no other Scriptures, as given by inspiration of God, or as their Bible, than the Old Testament.—The earliest ecclesiastical writers abound in expositions

fitions of the Old-testament Scriptures, while there is scarcely any thing in them like an appeal to the New Testament as the fountain and umpire of Truth. The epistles of *Ignatius*, which are deemed genuine, have nothing in them like a quotation from the writings of the Apostles, and only two or three doubtful references to a passage or two in St. Matthew and St. John's gospel: but, the spurious epistles attributed to Ignatius, which are supposed to have been written by an Arian, probably in the fourth century, abound with quotations from the New Testament^b. And, in proportion as the apostolical method of interpreting the Scriptures was obscured, by philosophical mysticism first of all, and afterwards neglected, the orthodox corrupted the doctrine of the Trinity and of the Divinity of Christ; and, when the New Testament began to rival the Old, Arianism sprung up, and, at last, overspread the Church. This, indeed, was not the fault of the New Testament, but of the partial use of it; not making it

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^b If the reader turn over the leaves of the edition of Ignatius by I. Vossius, and look at the margins, he will find twenty in the genuine epistles, he will find which is to me a proof that they are spurious.

the means of preserving the apostolical method of interpreting the Scriptures given by inspiration of God, but setting up the New Testament as The Christian Revelation, a Revelation by itself, a Revelation of a new doctrine, another Bible, which it never was, and was never designed to be. And, the Author thinks, he may be pardoned for offering an opinion merely as an opinion, that to this partiality, to following the method of the Schoolmen in interpreting the Scriptures, the fluctuating state of orthodoxy in Protestant Churches, and our innumerable heresies and schisms, are to be attributed.

It will be seen, in the following pages, that the Author considers the Old-testament dispensation as *altogether typical*. Whether the Jews, or any of them, knew any thing of the antitype, or understood the spiritual meaning of their Law, is a question which he has answered in the affirmative. And, if the contrary could be proved, yet the evidences, which the Author has produced to justify his position, that the whole Law, with all the circumstances of its promulgation, was designedly typical, would not, he thinks, be materially affected by it.

Some,

Some, perhaps, will say, What? Is it possible to consider the *moral Law*, the Ten Commandments, in this light? Can this precept, which is the sum of the whole Law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart*, be a typical Law? Yes; most undoubtedly: for, otherwise, it could not be the sum of the whole law, which is acknowledged to be in part typical. And, why may not moral precepts, given to a particular people upon some special occasion, and enjoined upon principles which relate to the particular circumstances of that people in this world, become a typical law, as well as the natural action of eating bread; which has been made a figurative, or sacramental emblem, or type of spiritual things which relate to a future world?

To love the **LORD** as *thy God*, the **God** of the *Jews*; to love Him because he *brought THEM out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage*, and because, by solemn compact, He became *their national legislator*, their *Patron* and **King**—to fear that power of His mighty hand, and stretched-out arm, which, in the sight of their forefathers, had crushed and destroyed their enemies, and which they knew by experience

rience could punish their own inventions, their mutinies and rebellions—to trust in such a *king* as JEHOVAH was in Israel, who had demonstrated His power above all that are called *Gods*, in the protection and salvation of His subjects—to love Him because He supported and defended them in the wilderness, and fed them by a miraculous providence; and because He brought them into the land of Canaan, and gave them the peaceful possession and enjoyment of it, and poured forth innumerable earthly blessings upon their persons and labours—all this, considered with the principle upon which the Lord their God challenged the love and obedience of *Israel*, was undoubtedly typical—typical of Jehovah Himself, of what He would be and do, as the God of the Gentiles also; when He should come down to deliver them; when He should promulge the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, and write it upon the hearts of all whom He should call out of darkness and deliver from the power of Satan; when as the principle of love and obedience, it should no more be said, *The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt*; but, *The Lord liveth which*

which brought up and led the seed of the house of the spiritual Israel, from all countries, into which they had been driven, and where they had been separated from the knowledge, love, and service of the living and true Godⁱ. And, the Reader is desired to consider, that the threatening and promise in the second commandment, and in the third likewise, and the promise and implied threatening in the fifth commandment, which also must be carried on to the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth, relate to the Jews and their *political interests* in the *land of Canaan*; and are altogether of a *temporal* nature: and then, let the Reader ask *himself*, Whether it be possible to consider this law in any other light than as a typical law; and as much so, as were the ordinances of circumcision and of sacrifice. And, finally, let it be considered, that they themselves, who call the Decalogue a *moral law*, acknowledge the fourth commandment to be in part

ⁱ The sons of Noah were Shinar; and, the Jews are now dispersed over the face of the earth, and fell into utter ignorance of the living and true God, through the apostacy which commenced, when the foundation of the idolatrous temple was laid in the land of Shinar; and, the Jews are now driven into all countries in consequence of their apostacy from the spirit of their Law; which apostacy of the Jews was completed by rejecting Christ and his Gospel.

part typical; or, as they express it, and, the Author thinks, very improperly, “*in part a ceremonial law.*”

Some, perhaps, will agree with the Author, that parts of the Old-testament *History* were designedly typical; that the calling of Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the wrestling of Jacob, the bondage of Israel in Egypt, their redemption from the tyranny of Pharaoh, their passage through the Wilderness, their feeding on manna, their drinking water from the Rock which followed them, their destruction by fiery serpents, and their deliverance from this plague by looking at a serpent lifted up on a pole without the camp; that these, and some other historical events, not only bore a striking analogy to many things in the Christian Church, but were intended to be a prophetical exhibition of them. Yet, they are afraid to acknowledge, that the *Whole* history from Adam to Moses, and of the Jews in particular from first to last, in relation to the land of Canaan, was intended to be a type, or pattern, of a higher providence in the spiritual establishment, government, and discipline of the Church.

It is objected, that there are parts of this

history, which seem to have no meaning beyond the literal sense ; and other parts, which seem to be introduced merely to connect the more important events with each other ; and that it would be absurd and dangerous to pry into this typical history with a too curious eye, or to look for some mystical meaning in every sentence, and in every word of the sacred story. The Author is aware of the mischief which has been done by mystical interpreters of the Scriptures ; and, he is as ready as any one to protest against the wild imaginations of enthusiasts. But, should the abuse of any thing, or the possibility of its being abused, determine our minds against it ? It is allowed, there are parts of this history, which seem to have no meaning beyond the literal sense : but then it may be asked, Are there not other parts, which we should have understood in the literal sense only, if the writers of the New Testament had not revealed their hidden meaning ? And, probably, the only reason why those other parts seem to be a mere historical relation of facts, may be our want of attention in reading the New Testament, and not remarking the perpetual references to the events

events in the Old-testament history, and the application of them to the circumstances of the Christian Church. And surely, it can be no objection against the opinion, that the *whole* history is typical, if we allow that there are parts of this history which have no separate and distinct meaning by themselves ; for, if they serve to connect the other more prominent parts, which have distinct typical meanings ; and, if all the parts taken together, as one body, are an exhibition of the higher providence of God, in the government and discipline of His Church, then *the whole is typical*.

The intention of authors, in writing prefaces to their works, is, generally, to conciliate the good opinion of their readers. Perhaps, this preface needs a preceding preface, to this end.—The Author does not flatter himself with the hope that his readers, or that any one of them, will approve every thing he shall read, either in this preface or in the following pages. Perhaps, some of them will meet what contradicts those opinions of which they are exceedingly jealous, and may be offended. The Author deprecates their anger and resentment. He assures them, that he means

to

to excite a spirit of inquiry, and not of contention : and, he desires those, who may be ready to take offence, to consider that they are not privileged with infallibility in any point ; and to reflect for a moment, whether the thing which offends them have not, at least, so much probability of argument accompanying it, as to make it reasonable that they guard against the influence of prejudice in their own minds ; and to make it their duty to research the Scriptures with a simple desire of knowing the truth ; whether the thing be so, or not. There is not a man in the world, whether Papist or Protestant, Churchman, or Dissenter, Calvinist or Arminian ; nor any one, whatever his opinions may be, whom the Author would willingly offend, and whose goodwill and approbation would not give him sincere pleasure. He appeals to the Sermon, annexed by way of Appendix, to evidence his regard for peace, unity, and concord. And, if his books could be brought in evidence, he would appeal to them, to witness the tears he has sometimes shed, when, in his private studies, he has felt the disagreeable necessity of differing from those whom, for their good intentions and

and pious labours he esteems and loves; and when he foresaw the more disagreeable necessity of being obliged, by virtue of his office, to avow his sentiments in opposition to their opinions: so that Truth itself, which is dearer to him than life, has given pain and filled him with anxieties.

May the God of truth guard every Reader against whatever error may be found in this work, and guide him into all the truth, which may be necessary to his peace and comfort, and to make him wise unto salvation! And may the God of peace and love diffuse into all hearts the spirit of brotherly love and Christian charity!

West Bromwich, Staffordshire,
May 1799.

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CHAPTER

CHAPTER I.

THE CREDIBILITY OF REVELATION.

ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God^a; that is, the Old-testament Scriptures, the writings of Moses and the Prophets, are not cunningly devised fables, the inventions of men: they contain neither private opinions, nor uncertain traditions, nor doctrines discovered, or that may be discovered, by natural reason and philosophy; they contain a revelation from God, commended to us by that supreme Authority which governs the universe.

The Old-testament Scriptures are called *the word of prophecy*, or the prophetic word^b; because they contain a revelation of divine promises, a prophetic declaration of the advent of Messiah and of the glory that should follow, in future ages. This prophecy, St. Peter tells us, *came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.

A

But,

* a 2 Timothy iii. 16.

b 2 Peter i. 19 — τον προφητικον λογον.

c 2 Peter i. 21.

But, is this true? Do the Scriptures indeed contain a revelation from God? Let us consider the nature of that evidence which authenticates the Bible.

I am well aware of the difficulty which attends this inquiry; not from any apprehension that the evidence is defective, but from the consideration of its vast redundancy. The degree of this evidence is accumulated and immense; more various and far greater than was ever adduced to establish any other facts or doctrines presented to the faith of mankind. The difficulty is in choosing, out of a vast variety, that which is most proper; that which is sufficient to produce conviction in unprejudiced minds; that which is plain to every one's comprehension; clear and decisive; and, which may be offered to my readers without the disgusting appearance of an affectation of learning.

Before I enter upon the proofs which establish the truth of Revelation, and that the Bible contains a revelation from God, it will be necessary to obviate an objection against the supposition that a revelation was ever given to mankind.

Whatever truths we have been learning from the earliest dawn of reason; or, whatever knowledge we have obtained, without being able to remember the beginning, or to mark the progress, of that learning and knowledge, and which we have acquired by imperceptible degrees; we are apt to imagine to be a kind of natural knowledge, a sort of instinctive perception: it seems to be so obvious, so plain and evident, that we readily conclude we should not fail to discover the same truths or doctrines, if we had been placed in any other

other circumstances than those in which we were educated. That there is a God, that He is eternal, almighty; that He is perfectly wise, just, good, and merciful—these are truths which we have been learning from our infancy: and, because of the importance of this doctrine, that there is an almighty Being, the Creator and Governor of the universe, it has not only been carefully taught us, and inculcated in our early youth, but we have been led to think there is no other truth so plain and evident as this. An appeal has been constantly made to the works of creation, as the plainest and fullest proof of the being of Almighty God; and to the order of things, as a perfect demonstration of his wise, good, and merciful providence. We have imbibed a strong prejudice that nothing can be plainer, and that this doctrine is obvious to all mankind. We fancy that we ourselves should have known God and worshipped Him, if we had been born of savages, and always lived in the wilds of America.

This prejudice is greatly encouraged by considering that the ancient heathen Philosophers entertained, or are reported to have entertained, the justest notions of the supreme Being without the aid of any revelation. And, if they by searching found out God, discovered his existence and providence, and also the immortality of the soul, we may well suppose, and even conclude upon it, that it is highly probable, at least not impossible, that we ourselves might have attained to the knowledge of God without assistance from any extraordinary revelation, or any foreign aid whatever.

This presumption is the foundation of the most forcible argument against Revelation; which detains many from receiving the Gospel, and even precludes all attention to the evidences which authenticate the Bible. It strikes at the root of all revelation from God, by asserting that it is incredible, because unnecessary; and unnecessary, because the reason which God has bestowed upon mankind is sufficient to discover all the religious truths and moral duties, which he requires of them to know and practise, if they would attend to her dictates, and be guided by her friendly admonitions.

The objection itself furnishes a proper answer; which is plainly this, IF—*If they would attend to her dictates and be guided by her friendly admonitions.* But, what *if* there be some natural infirmity, or some acquired defect, or fault, in human nature, through which mankind cannot, or will not, attend to the dictates of reason, nor be guided by her friendly admonitions? What, *if* man was never sent into the world, on a voyage of discovery, to *find out* God, and it be no part of his duty to *discover*, nor the office of his reason to *dictate*, religious truths? What, *if* man be merely capable of *receiving* instruction, in the knowledge of God; but, not of being self-taught; not of *inventing* a religion for himself, nor of *improving* upon any obscure intimations of God, from whatever source such intimations may have been derived? What, *if* the dictates of reason always follow, but never precede, a divine revelation? Upon the truth of either of these suppositions, what becomes of this formidable objection? And, what becomes of it,
if

if it be proved to be true in fact, demonstrated by the history and experience of all nations in all ages, that the reason of man never made any discovery in religion; never discovered any thing of God; never attained to any knowledge of God at all; even to so much as this, to know there is a God, a Creator, a supreme intelligent Existence, upon whom all other beings depend?—*If* this be proved to be true in fact, it will certainly follow, as a necessary consequence, that a revelation hath actually been given to mankind. For, every Deist allows, there is some knowledge of God in the world; and, *if* that knowledge was not attained by the mere exertions of reason, it must have been derived from Revelation, and from that revelation which we find in the Bible; there being no other which can compare with this, and which has not the mark, either of imposture, or of derivation from this revelation, or both, plainly stamped upon it.

We are now led to that evidence which I mean to produce before all other, to prove the divine origin of that revelation which is contained in the Holy Scriptures. There is in the world what we call religious knowledge, or the knowledge of God. This is allowed by Deists, as well as by Christians: it is generally confessed by every one who is not professedly an Atheist. If it can be proved that this knowledge, whatever it be, and of whatever kind or degree, is not the offspring of mere human reason, it must follow incontrovertibly, that it is derived from Revelation; and, that the revelation from which it is derived is a

divine revelation communicated to mankind by God Himself.

It is undoubtedly matter of fact, that the bulk of mankind, in all ages, and in every nation, have been either entirely ignorant, or possessed only the most obscure and indistinct ideas, of those religious and moral truths and duties which may be supposed to have been the dictates of right reason; and have acted in a manner invariably and absolutely inconsistent with them. Whole nations have existed for many ages without ever attaining to any knowledge, or any apprehension, that there is a divine immaterial Spirit, the Source of all light and life, the Author of our Being, the Creator and Governor of the Universe. There never was a single instance of a single person that ever lived, who, by reflection merely, by thinking and reasoning, ever started the idea of God, of His existence and providence, or produced in his mind even a doubtful persuasion that there is a God who judgeth the earth. There never was a Deist, excepting where the light of Revelation shined.

It is no contradiction to this, if we allow that some of the ancient heathen Philosophers uttered many things not unworthy of the Supreme Being. There are indeed some divine sentences in their writings: but, these divine sentences were more like the blaze of meteors in the dark, or flashes of lightning at midnight, than the clear and steady light of day. Their light was mingled with much darkness, and insufficient to discover that darkness to them; at least, to expel the darkness, to illumine the world, or even their own souls.

They

They were still subject to the vanities of the superstitious vulgar, enslaved by prejudice, and addicted to vicious practices.

But, supposing their knowledge to have been far better, or more perfect, than it really was; yet, in order to prove the sufficiency of human reason, for the discovery of religious and moral truth, from the knowledge of these ancient philosophers, it should first be proved, that, whatever knowledge they possessed, it was derived from unassisted reason; and then, that it contained a system of religious and moral truth adequate to the exigencies of human nature in its present state; and held forth those powerful motives, which are sufficient to engage mankind, and to profelyte the ignorant and vicious to wisdom and virtue. But, this is impossible to be proved; while the contrary may be evinced most clearly.

It is very remarkable, yet but little noticed, that they who spake, or wrote, any thing worthily of the divine nature, or of man, expressed their doctrines sceptically, full of doubt and uncertainty. Secondly, these great men did not presume to deliver their doctrines, concerning the being of God, or his providence, or a future state, or the immortality of the soul, as their own discoveries and inventions. All that they did, or could, pretend to, were some refinements on the vulgar superstitions, some modifications of opinions already received. There was nothing properly their own, but their errors. They had the justice, and the modesty too, to disclaim the merit of discovery, or of being the inventors of religious truth. They plainly and repeatedly acknowledg-

ed that the doctrine of the being of God, or of the existence of divine Powers, of a Providence, of the *formation* of the world (for, of *creation* they had no idea), of a future state, of the immortality of the soul, was derived by tradition from the first ages of the world. This acknowledgment on their part removes all force from the argument for the sufficiency of reason, resulting from the knowledge of these Philosophers. It was a plain declaration, that human reason is insufficient to be the instructor of mankind in religious and moral truth. And, if *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Aristotle*, did not discover any divine truth through the mere force of reason, it is surely no small degree of presumption and arrogance in any man, who shall fancy *his* reason sufficient to discover what, these great men acknowledged, they derived from another source. And, it is no derogation from the abilities of our modern infidels, nor even of a *Newton* or *Locke*, to say—if they had not been enlightened by Revelation; if they had been born and bred in the interior parts of Africa or America; they might indeed have shewn a superiority of genius in the little policies of their tribe, and in the rude arts which necessity teaches them to practise; but, they would have been as ignorant of God as other savages, who know nothing of His existence and moral perfections.

The ancient Philosophers did not disclaim the sufficiency of reason, merely by their honest acknowledgments of information by tradition, but by their actions likewise. For, when they travelled into Egypt and Persia, for information in religious

religious truth, what did they declare but this, that their own reason was an insufficient guide?

When they acknowledged, that letters were above the powers of human invention ; that the immortality of the soul was an ancient tradition derived from the remotest ages, so ancient that no one knew any thing of its commencement, nor who first entertained the opinion, and that it prevailed from the beginning : when they confessed that religion, the notion of divine powers, of the existence of some deity, and the opinion that all things had a beginning ;—that these were ancient traditions, delivered down to all men by their fathers who dwelt nearer to the Gods—We cannot understand any thing, by these acknowledgments, less than this, that the religion of these ancient sages was derived from that very revelation which we have in the Bible.

And this will more plainly appear to be the real truth, if we consider some particulars in the religion, which was observed by the people, and countenanced by these famous Philosophers ; their lustrations, libations, priesthood, and sacrifices ; of the origin of which, no other probable account can be given, than that they were derived from Revelation. There are not any principles of natural reason ; there is not any thing in the condition of human nature, nor in the constitution of the world, that could possibly lead to such practices. Yet, we find, wherever there has been any thing of religion remaining in any tribes or nations, however distant or separated from all intercourse with each other, the practice of sacrifices has obtained. The Canaanites, the Greeks, the Tyrians, the Carthaginians,

Carthaginians, the ancient Britons and Gauls, and the lately discovered Islanders, offered human sacrifices to the Deity. *Cæsar*, who conquered Britain nearly two thousand years ago, informs us, that it was the opinion of the Druids, who were priests of the Britons and Gauls, that nothing but the life of man can atone for the life of man; that therefore public sacrifices were instituted; and, that in threatening dangers of distemper or war, they made no scruple to sacrifice men, or engaged themselves by vow to such sacrifices. And this was likewise the opinion and practice of other people, who had no connection with the Druids; and is to this day, the practice of people in the Pacific Ocean, who have no knowledge of, nor intercourse with each other. Now, if there be no principle of reason to justify these practices, and if there be nothing in the natural frame and constitution of things, which could lead men to them, there is the highest degree of probability that they were derived from Revelation; and consequently, that all the religion, or religious knowledge, of the heathen world, was derived from this source. It is only in the revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures, that we discover any reason for the institution of sacrifices. There we learn, that without shedding of blood is no remission of sins; that sacrifices of animals were instituted from the very beginning, as soon as sin had entered into the world, and subjected mankind to death as the wages of sin; that these sacrifices were instituted to typify one great and proper sacrifice, of infinite value, to be offered for the sin of the whole world; and, that this sacrifice was to be of one in our own

own nature, a human sacrifice, for that nothing but the life of man, no blood of beasts, can atone for man.

There is yet another circumstance, mentioned by *Julius Cæsar* in his Commentaries, which points out to us the origin of the Heathen religion. The ancient Gauls and Britons preferred for victims such as had been convicted of crimes, believing them to be most acceptable to the Gods: and, this opinion prevails to this day among the idolaters in the islands of the South Sea. This circumstance is utterly unaccountable, excepting on the principles of Revelation. Here we learn, that the nature of a sacrifice consists in devoting a person to the curse of vindictive justice, that is, to suffer death as the punishment of sin; that all typical sacrifices bore imputed guilt, and, that the one great sacrifice for sin was actually made a curse for us; that He *his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree*, and suffered death to make an atonement for our souls.

There are innumerable other instances, in the mythological history of the Heathen, in their theogony, theology, traditional opinions, and religious practices, which correspond with the history of Moses and the doctrines of Revelation. The correspondence is so particular and exact in a vast variety of instances, that it would be just as reasonable to believe the order, analogy, and agreement of all the parts of the universe, were produced by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, as that this correspondence between Heathenism and Revelation, could exist, in such a vast variety of instances, by mere chance. There must be an adequate cause
of

of this wonderful effect. And, the propensity of human nature, to plunge into error and to practise iniquity, will account for it. Millions and millions of facts, in the history of mankind prove that this propensity exists and hath a perpetual influence. Man is prone to forget God and to think of Him otherwise than *HE IS*. St. Paul accounts for the idolatries and vices of the Heathen upon this very principle; They did **NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE**; which implies that they had known God, and that their idolatries and vices were the effects of a wicked and ungrateful apostacy. God had revealed Himself; and, the nations, as man is ever prone to do, corrupted the revelation of God; till the divine institutions, the religion which God had established, were totally perverted, and degenerated, at last, into the vilest superstition and idolatry; yet still the revelation retained indubitable marks of its origin, even in its greatest degree of corruption.

The reader may see a parallel instance in the state of Christendom at this present day. The Christian world is divided and subdivided into a thousand sects. Their opinions and practices are extremely various and inconsistent. Yet, there is a certain degree of sameness of character, of opinion and practice, in all these sects, sufficient to persuade any one that they all derived their religion from one common source. And, whatever variety there be in the religious practices of Heathenism, ancient and modern, and, in different countries, still there is that degree of sameness of character, of opinion and practice: and, the general use of altars, sacrifices, purifications, priesthood, point

point to one common origin ; but, which can nowhere be found, excepting in the Book of Revelation.

If any one were to shew a lock of most curious and inimitable workmanship, telling us that, in an heap of ten thousand keys, there is one which belongs to it, and which was made by the same artist who invented and made the lock ; and if, after repeated trials of many hundreds of these keys, we at last find one which exactly suits all the intricate wards of this lock, and which hath upon it the same curious and inimitable workmanship which appears on the lock itself ; we can have no doubt that this is the very key which belongs to it. Such is the nature of that evidence, which I have been considering. Look abroad into the world. You see mysteries inexplicable. But Revelation unlocks all these mysteries, and declares the hidden wisdom of God in the dispensations of His providence ; or, if any thing still remain a mystery, it is only because we are not interested in the knowledge of that thing ; or because the human understanding hath its limits, beyond which we are incapable of receiving any information.

Consider the horrid darkness, which, to this day, covers the greatest part of mankind : consider the confessions of the most learned and the wisest of the heathen Philosophers, that all their knowledge was received by tradition : consider that they were unable to improve the little light which they received in this way ; that, in their attempts to improve that light, they fell into vain janglings and oppositions of science falsely so called, and into

into a labyrinth of errors, out of which not one of them could ever extricate himself: and, consider the religion of the Heathen, and the many strong marks it bears of derivation from some common parent, or from some very ancient institution, and of derivation from the revelation which the Scriptures offer to us: You will then discern the source of all the light that is in the world; and, that what is called *The Light of Nature*, is nothing more than an imperfect degree of *The Light of Revelation*. The very Atheist himself is indebted to Revelation; for, he never would have disputed against the being and providence of God, he would have no apprehension of the object against which he dares to reason, if the Scriptures had not revealed, or if traditional revelation had not intimated, that there is a God who judgeth the earth.

Observe the coincidence of the Bible, the agreement and harmony of its doctrines, with the history of mankind, with the present state and condition of human nature, and with all that we see, and hear, and know, and experience. It is owing to this agreement of things, that the word of God, contained in the Book of Revelation, speaks so powerfully to the consciences of men, declaring to them what, otherwise, they never would have known; or, which they never would have observed in themselves and others, if this revelation had not enlightened them, and manifested both the invisible things of God and those circumstances of things in the world and in themselves, which unenlightened reason cannot distinguish; but which, when revealed, appear to have as real existence,

existence, and to be as certain as the groffer objects of sense. It is the word of God, contained in the Book of Revelation, which makes manifest the secrets and counsels of the heart, and shews us what we immediately become conscious of, in our past and present experience ; but which we never should have thought of, without the interposition of this revelation ; and which no man, without the aid of this revelation, could have discovered to us. And, it is this analogy between the sytem of nature and the truths of Revelation, and these conscious feelings within ourselves excited by the divine word, which impresses the mind with a strong persuasion and lively conviction of its truth, that it is indeed *a revelation from God.*

There is also an astonishing simplicity and majesty in the divine Word, totally different from every thing merely human ; and as far above the compositions of human genius, as the works of creation are superior to the productions of art, the little contrivancies and policies of men. You may be deceived by the sound of distant cannon, or of a carriage passing on the public road, and may fancy that it thunders ; but, when it really thunders over your head, you at once distinguish the voice of God, and are immediately convinced that no power on earth can express any thing like this ; you feel an entire conviction, that *it is the glorious God that maketh the thunder ; He uttereth his voice, and the earth melteth.* There are a thousand deceptions in the world ; and many doctrines are received as oracles, which have no pretension to a divine original. The Word of God

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is essentially different from these. It carries conviction with it to the heart of all who attentively hear it. It reveals, what God only can speak; and speaks in that style which is proper to God alone. *It is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

There is a beautiful illustration of this in 1 Cor. xiv. *If the whole Church be come together into one place; and, while the ministers are prophesying, that is, reading, expounding, and preaching the word of God in any language that is generally understood; if there come in one that believeth not, an infidel, or one unlearned, who is totally unacquainted with the nature and design of Christianity, he is convinced of all; what he hears carries its own evidence with it, while it manifests the depravity of his heart, and burdens his conscience with the guilt of his sins: he is judged of all, and stands condemned before the Holy Lord God: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, to which he had been till now, perhaps, a perfect stranger; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, by imploring the divine mercy, and will report to others that God is in you of a truth, having an undoubted persuasion of the truth of the divine revelation.*

This conviction is wrought, not by any process of argumentation, upon the external and internal evidences of Revelation, in a logical discourse; for the person thus affected is represented as having come into the Christian assembly by accident, while

while the ministers were *prophesying^d*, declaring, expounding, and preaching the divine Word, not to infidels, but to *believing^d* Christians. It was the agreement of the Word of God with the whole course of things, its concord with all the feelings of humanity, its energy upon his heart and conscience, the divine simplicity and majesty of the Word, the discovery it gave him of his own character, and of that of God, and the experience he had of it, as the power of God to his salvation, enlightening his mind and sanctifying his spirit, which persuaded him to acknowledge the truth, and to prostrate himself before the throne of the Divine Beneficence.

There may be other evidence preparative to this, and necessary, in some cases, to dispose men to read and hear the Word of God: but, this evidence of the truth and importance of Revelation is that, by which any one is converted to God, and becomes both a proselyte to the Christian name, and a real Christian. And, it may be doubted, whether he, who professes to believe, on what is now called, *rational* conviction, do really believe what he professes. It is probable, that he feels nothing more than an uncertain apprehension of the truth of Revelation, without any fixed determination of his mind^e.

^d *Prophecyng to believing Christians*, ver. 2. “ Tongues are for “ a sign, not to them that believe, “ but to them that believe not: “ but *prophecyng* serveth not for “ them that believe not, but for “ them which believe. By which “ (faith Dr. Hammond) it appears that the use of the gift of “ tongues is principally as a mirror, and that for the converting “ of unbelievers; but inter-

“ *preting* of Scriptures, and *teaching* doctrines, is that which is “ most proper for believers.”

^e Probably with no more fixed determination of his mind than the degree in which Cicero assented to Plato’s doctrine of the immortality of the soul—*Dum lego, assentior: cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animalium cœpi cogitare, assentio omnis illa elabitur.*

CHAPTER II.

THE TRUTH OF REVELATION.

ST. Luke wrote his evangelical history, as he told Theophilus in the preface, that he might know, and, undoubtedly, that many others might know, THE CERTAINTY of those things wherein they had been instructed. In an affair of infinite importance, every one, who pays any regard to it, will wish for something more satisfactory than conjectural reasonings; something more solid than arguments of probability, which barely incline the mind to a doubtful assent; something that will produce intire conviction.

If the evidence of the Truth of Revelation had been no greater than the degree of proof which is sufficient to persuade the mind in all other instances, it would be our duty to receive it: Infidelity would be utterly inexcusable, as it could proceed from no other cause than the obliquity of our hearts. But, the evidence which authenticates the Bible is so prodigiously great, so accumulated and various, that it may be questioned whether any human mind did ever comprehend the whole extent, and force, and vast variety of this evidence. All things rise in proof; ancient and modern history,

tory, profane, and sacred; the course of the world; the daily occurrences of human life; miracles and prophecies; the rise and fall of empires; enemies as well as friends; Heathens, Jews, Infidels, and Heretics; true religion, and superstition itself; the sufferings of the Church, and even its corruptions, its divisions, its foulest disgrace; learning and ignorance; the very languages of mankind; the various castes and characters of the human race; the face of the globe; the strata of the earth; the very ground we tread upon; all things within and without us;—*ALL* conspire in giving evidence that the Bible contains THE WORD OF GOD.

That the Old Testament was in being long before the birth of our Saviour cannot be doubted. The five books of Moses were translated into Greek when the *Ptolemies* reigned in Egypt; probably in the beginning of the reign of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*^f. The writings of the Prophets were translated into the same language not long after that period. There is sufficient evidence that the writings of Moses, and the Prophets^g existed in the days of *Cyrus*, the Persian; or, when the Jews, by favour of a decree of *Cyrus*, returned from their first captivity: And, there is no time, posterior to the death of Moses, and prior to the return from Babylon, that can be assigned with any degree of probability, when it may reasonably be imagined that the writings, attributed to Moses, were first composed,

^f Almost three hundred years before Christ. Ezra, Nehemiah, and of the Prophet Malachi, which were written

^g Excepting only the writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, and of the Prophet Malachi, which were written after the return from Babylon,

composed, and published, and received as authentic and genuine. There is no time after the Jews became a nation, when the law, and the practice of circumcision, could be imposed upon this nation, consisting of millions of people.

The Jews have, at least, as much reason to believe the real existence of Moses, and that he was, under God, the deliverer and legislator of Israel, as we have to believe there was such a man as *Alfred*, king of England, a wise and valiant, and pious prince; that he conquered the Danes, made wholesome laws, and executed justice. And they have, at least, as much reason to believe Moses wrote the books attributed to him, as we have to believe the genuineness of the Commentaries attributed to *Julius Cæsar*.

When we speak of the Jews in contradistinction to all other people, we pay no regard to the times in which any of them lived, nor do we distinguish the ten tribes from the children of Judah and Benjamin; but, we speak of the *whole* as one nation, a political body having perpetual existence. Their national character has been one and the same in all ages; and their faith in the authenticity and genuineness of the writings of Moses has always been one and the same.

Viewing them collectively, it will appear that their faith is not Prejudice, nor mere Credulity, nor merely a rational Assent to credible testimony; but, that it is Knowledge, grounded upon Experience. When they came out of Egypt, their numbers, reckoning men, women, and children, amounted to about two millions. These were all eye-witnesses, and had sensible experience, of the miracles

miracles which produced their emancipation. The miraculous providence which conducted them through the Red Sea, through the wilderness into Canaan, and which settled and protected them in the promised land, was an object of certain experience, the experience of the whole nation. The same miraculous providence continued to be their experience from age to age; and continues to this day, in preserving them a distinct people, and in preserving the sameness of character in them, though dispersed amongst all nations throughout the world. They may therefore say, "We not only *believe*, because from our "very childhood, it has been implanted and sown "in our hearts to believe the writings of Moses "and the Prophets, so that we are ready to stand "by them, and for their sake, if occasion require, "to suffer death with a constant mind; but, we "are assured by experience and *know* that God "spake unto Moses and to our fathers by the "Prophets."

But now, supposing the history contained in the Book of Genesis, which is an account of transactions that happened long before Moses was born: *supposing*, I say, that this history was composed from Egyptian monuments of great antiquity, and from traditional reports, will it follow that this history is not authentic, or that Moses did not write it? Supposing that the five Books of Moses were not written by him, but were written by Joshua, or by any other person, will it follow that the children of Israel were not in Egypt, and subject to the tyranny of Pharaoh? Will it follow that they did not pass through the Red Sea, that

they did not sojourn in the wilderness forty years, and that they did not drive out the Canaanites and possess their land? Making these suppositions, still it is true that these writings, and those of the Prophets, existed many hundred years before the birth of Christ: still it is true that, from a very early period, this history ascribed to Moses was received as authentic and genuine by the whole nation of Jews: and still it is true that all the prophecies of the Old Testament were believed by this whole nation to be prophecies given by inspiration of God; and particularly that the principal subject of these prophecies was the advent of a most important person in the divine character of Meffiah.

These truths cannot be denied. Here then we have sufficient ground, upon which we may proceed with confidence to vindicate the truth of Christianity. For, prophecies may be proved to be real prophecies given by inspiration of God, either by establishing the character of the prophets, or of those who appeal to the prophecies as the certain dictates of inspiration: they may be proved to be real prophecies by miracles wrought at the time when the prophecies were published, or afterwards: or, they may be proved to be real prophecies by the event, that is, by their completion; for, the prophecies, or which were recorded as prophecies in the very ancient writings of the Jews, are too well defined, and, at the same time, are too extensive and complicate, that is, they comprehend too great a variety of particular circumstances, and many of them too extraordinary, to admit a probability, or even a possibility, that they

they should ever obtain their accomplishment by chance or accident, or that they should assume the appearance of an accomplishment by the art of accommodation. If then the Apostles of Jesus Christ were worthy of credit; if they appealed to the prophecies in the Old Testament as given by inspiration of God; if God himself *bore witness* to the character and testimony of the Apostles *with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost*; and if the prophecies, particularly those which relate to the advent of Messiah and its consequences, have received and are receiving their accomplishment; we may certainly conclude that the Old-testament Scriptures contain a revelation from God, that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, and that Christianity is worthy of all acceptation.

But, before I enter more particularly into this subject, I hasten to remove a prejudice which may prevent attention to the evidence of truth.

Christianity has been reproached by enemies, and unguardedly represented by friends, as an incomprehensible doctrine: It has been reproached as an impracticable system, and more fitted to affright than to allure mankind. If it were so; no arguments, no evidence whatever, could be attended to, as sufficient to establish this doctrine: It ought to be rejected at once, as unworthy of God to reveal, and unfit for man to receive. But the case is far otherwise. The Truths of Revelation are indeed worthy of all acceptation. They are the wisdom of God. They bear the impress of the essential beauty. They enlighten the eyes, and rejoice the heart. They administer support to

the tried and tempted. They dispel the dark gloom of despair from guilty consciences, and lead men to virtue, to happiness, and to God. Such are the doctrines of Revelation, that they often carry the evidence of their divinity along with them to the heart and conscience with the brightness, the quickness, and the force of lightning. Thousands have been convinced by the internal evidence of the Christian doctrines, that they are of God. The works of creation do not more strongly bear upon them the evidence that an intelligent Being made the world, than these doctrines do that God was their author. If there were no other evidence of the truth of Christianity, this would be sufficient; at least, perfectly satisfactory to them who will attend to it. So far therefore are the doctrines of Christianity from that forbidding aspect which is unjustly imputed to them, that nothing can be more plain and evident, nothing more beautiful. They invite the study, admiration, and regard, of the most learned, and are level with the capacity of ploughmen and mechanics. Let them be declared, and attended to, and they shall, in the same moment, captivate the brightest genius of human kind, and emancipate the soul of an African slave, and set him above the misery of his condition. Declared by the same preachers, and in the same language, they shall dilate the heart of the poor, and reconcile them to their lot, and contract the pride of kings, and clothe them with humility: they shall make all orders and degrees of men to *behold the fair beauty of the Lord*; draw tears of godly sorrow and of gratitude from their eyes, while they are filled with

with wonder, love, and praise. And, shall doctrines, which can produce these effects, and do produce them, be called incomprehensible doctrines?

But I am reminded of those doctrines, which some presume to call the *unintelligible* and *incomprehensible* doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation. *Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, &c.* In the Scriptures, that is called a *mystery* which had been kept secret, which had not been generally known, which is not discoverable by human reason, and which is not revealed in all its relations. In this last sense, especially, the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation are a great mystery. But, this hinders not: All that is revealed on these subjects is plain to the meanest capacity. Every one, whose intellects are in any degree superior to downright idiotism, may apprehend them as well as men of the most enlarged philosophic mind. A doctrine which is *revealed*, that is, which is plainly declared and made known to us, cannot with any degree of propriety be called *unintelligible* and *incomprehensible*. The very term implies the contrary. That only is unintelligible and incomprehensible, in relation to these subjects, which God has *not* revealed; and which, when the curious, or presumptuous, eye of man dares to pry into, or would investigate, overwhelms his finite and very limited powers.

I would illustrate these remarks in doctrines against which there lies not so much prejudice. It is revealed that there is a God who judgeth the earth. This fundamental truth is not above the

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the meanest capacity. It is as plain as this, that George the Third is our most gracious sovereign, the chief magistrate in this realm. The mode of God's existence, the nature of God, is incomprehensible. We have no revelation on this subject; but, shall we therefore say the plainest proposition that can be expressed is unintelligible and incomprehensible? Is it therefore unintelligible and incomprehensible that there is a God, and that He judgeth the earth, merely because we cannot comprehend His eternity and self-existence? or, because we cannot unravel, or comprehend, all the intricate mazes of his providence?

Again, it is a revealed truth, that God created the world; but, not *how* He created it. We are not told how the will of God operated in giving being to things which were not. This therefore is incomprehensible; or, if you please, is no doctrine of Revelation. But, the fact, that God created the world, produced it into being, has nothing in it that is incomprehensible. It is as plain a truth as this, that Solomon built the temple. And thus, every doctrine in the Bible, relating to the Trinity and the Inearnation, is as plain, as intelligible, as any other truth can be; as plain as that two and two are equal to four. Whatever is unintelligible and incomprehensible, in relation to these subjects, is either what man has added to the doctrines of Revelation, or that only which God has not thought fit to reveal, and which, therefore, is no object of our faith^b.

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^b I embrace this opportunity to mention the unjust imputations of those men who seek to prejudge our minds against some of the most important truths of Revelation, by calling them unintelligible.

As God has not revealed any thing which is not intelligible, and plain, when revealed, and because revealed, so He has not revealed any thing which cannot be proved to be credible even by a process of reasoning; nor has He required us to believe revealed truths, without the strongest evidence that He has revealed them; such evidence as is irresistible, if our own perverseness, or wickedness, do not hinder. God requires us to be reasonable creatures in the Church as well as in the World, and able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. He would have us know the *CERTAINTY* of those things wherein we have been instructed. It is not sufficient to embrace the truths of the Gospel; but, we must examine the ground on which they rest, and be certainly persuaded of them by their own proper evidence. It is the design of God, the very end of His revelation, not to make us superstitious, or fools, unto salvation; but, to make us wise unto salvation; to make us reasonable creatures, reasonable in our judgment of things, reasonable in our views, our faith, our hopes, our tempers, and our conduct. And then only shall we be perfectly blessed, holy, and happy, when right reason, eternal truth, the wisdom of God, shall entirely fill and characterise our nature.

Religion

ble and incomprehensible mysteries, and even absurd and monstrous doctrines; whereas, in truth, they are all as plain to the most acute geniuses. And I would add, from Mr. Parkhurst,

that "in almost every text where 'in μυστηριον, mystery, is used, it is mentioned as something which is revealed, declared, shewn, spoken, ploughmen and mechanics, as to 'or which may be known or understood.'"

Religion has often been represented as an engine of state, invented by law-givers, by politicians, and princes, to bind the observation of their laws upon the consciences of their subjects. It certainly can be no object to religion, that it has a secondary or subordinate utility; that it subserves the purpose of government, and is beneficial to human society. But, statesmen, or the civil powers, had no concern whatever in the establishment of Christianity. Religion too has been said to be the contrivance of mercenary priests. But, Christianity was not propagated by priests: priests had no hand in it. Christianity was preached by lay-men in simple attire, without the aid of secular learning, or philosophy, and without the concurrence of worldly policy and power.

The first preachers of Christianity were men of plain sense. They were evidently void of that ambition, which has excited some men to extraordinary darings. The prejudices of their education were directly opposite to the doctrines they taught. They could not propose to enrich themselves. They forsook a certain maintenance for a most uncertain one. Silver and gold had they none, nor would they meddle with it; for, when a strife arose about alms to be distributed amongst the widows of Jewish and Grecian Christians, the Apostles refused to be concerned in this business, that they might give themselves up entirely to the proper work of the ministry. They could not propose honour to themselves as the reward of their labours; for, they well knew that they exposed themselves to contempt, and that they should certainly meet reproach, and shame, and hatred,

hatred, and be counted as the filth and off-scouring of all things. The ease and comforts, the satisfactions and enjoyments, of life, were as little affected by them as that voluntary poverty and proud humility, which are the offspring of vain superstition. They neither courted persecution nor refused to suffer. They knew they must suffer persecution, yet avoided it when they could; and, all of them, except St. John, sealed their testimony with their blood. Never did sincerity appear in the character and conduct of men more plainly than in the Apostles of Jesus Christ. They did not intend to deceive or impose upon mankind. They were certainly good men. Bad men would not, could not, act as they did, nor invent and teach the holy doctrine which they preached.

They had not the power of deceiving, to the degree in which they deceived mankind, if they deceived at all. The circumstances of things rendered it impossible. They could not, by the strength of their own abilities, surmount the many and great obstacles which lay in their way. Priests and Princes every where, all worldly powers, prejudices of all sorts of people, learning and ignorance, argument and ridicule, and, which of all other things is the most destructive in its tendency, the perversion of Truth by false brethren, by enthusiasts of every complexion, by bigots, and knaves, opposed the merciful design of the Christian dispensation. The views and propensities of human nature are directly opposite to the Christian religion: man is of the earth, earthly; but, this is from heaven, heavenly. We may therefore conclude, if Christianity had been a fable, it could

could not have been so widely propagated by such weak instruments, as were the Apostles of Jesus Christ; or, supposing it to be the heavenly doctrine it pretends to be, the Apostles, labouring in their own strength, could never have made one real Christian.

The horrid degree of impiety in imposing upon mankind, in an affair of infinite importance, was absolutely inconsistent with the character of the **Apostles**. They could neither intend to deceive, nor had they the power to deceive, nor were they themselves deceived. They had full evidence of all they taught. The miracles which they saw with their eyes; the divinity which plainly appeared in the person, the doctrine, and actions, of their divine Master; his resurrection from the dead; the out-pouring of the Spirit, whose influence they felt on their own minds and hearts, and which they exerted upon others in many wonderful works; and, the authority and testimony of the Old Testament, of which they were perfectly persuaded, gave full satisfaction to their minds, and assure us that they could not be deceived.

Consider the variety of those testimonies in the Old Testament, which the Apostles believed to be real prophecies of the Messiah. They particularize the character of Messiah in so many circumstances, that it was morally impossible they should all meet in an impostor. They describe so extraordinary a character, that, if that character was ever found on earth, the prophecies must have been real prophecies; and, the person in whom they received their accomplishment must have been the very Christ of God. It was revealed in
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these prophecies that the Messiah should be born at an appointed time: They expressed the very time of his coming. They pointed out the tribe, and the very family; that he should be of the tribe of Judah, of the house and lineage of David; David's seed, yet David's Lord; that he should be *God with us*, or *God manifest in the flesh*; that he should be born in Bethlehem; that he should be born of a virgin; that he should live in poverty, be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that he should work miracles of various kinds; and, though innocent as a lamb, holy and righteous, he should be despised and rejected of men; that he should be sold at the price of a slave, suffer for sin not his own, and be cut off out of the land of the living; that they should part his garments amongst them, and cast lots for his vesture, and look on him whom they had pierced; that he should, notwithstanding, prolong his days and rise again the third day; that he should ascend into heaven, and pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh: These, and many other particularizing prophecies of the Old Testament, all met and received their accomplishment in the person of Jesus Christ, and gave perfect satisfaction to the Apostles that this was He which was to come.

Consider that one circumstance, the proof of all the rest, the resurrection of Jesus. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to other women, to Peter, to two disciples at Emmaus, to the Eleven, to five hundred brethren at once; and continued forty days with the Apostles instructing them in things relating to the kingdom of God: and, after his ascension, he appeared to St. Stephen and to St.

Paul.

Paul. The Apostles saw him with their eyes ; looked upon him ; handled him ; conversed with him ; walked with him ; ate and drank with him ; and had every evidence that he was alive after his crucifixion and death, which they had before he suffered. They were not easy of belief. They were incredulous and obstinate, so as to deserve reproof for the degree of their incredulity. They would not believe without the strongest evidence, until the degree of it overpowered their unbelief ; and, such were their fears and prejudices, they could not be persuaded to face the opposition of their countrymen, nor to go out into all the world to preach the Gospel, until they were compelled to it by the constraining influence of the divine Spirit, and were persuaded to it by particular revelations. There is then no ground for the presumption that they were deceived.

But may not we doubt, even as to the existence of such persons and facts ? At this distance of time, it may be asked, What assurance, or certainty, can we have that there were such men, and that such miracles were wrought by them ? We have no mathematical certainty. The case does not admit mathematical demonstration. And, therefore, it is absurd to require this kind of evidence. We cannot have ocular demonstration, or the testimony of our senses. But, we have other kind of evidence, that of the highest degree of probability ; which, in all other cases, assures the mind, as much as my eyes can assure me that I see at this moment any object which is placed before them.

Many persons never saw London, the metropolis

polis of this kingdom ; and yet, they are as certainly assured there is such a city as I can be that there is such a book as the Bible when I hold it in my hand. In both cases, the mind is equally persuaded to act upon the conviction of what is heard, or seen, or felt. Who that is acquainted with history can doubt for a moment, whether there ever was such a man as *Julius Cæsar*, or whether there is such a city as *Paris*, or *Rome*? The testimony of hundreds and thousands of people, who could not possibly combine together ; who could have no interest, and no intention, to deceive ; and not only the concurrence of their testimony, but of a multitude of circumstances too, out of their view, give me as great a certainty of things existing, in distant places and times, as my senses give me of any thing present at this moment. The testimony of enemies too unites with that of the universal Church. Porphyry, Celsus, Julian, the Jews from our Saviour's appearance to the present time, have acknowledged the truth of the historical facts, that there was such a person as Christ, and such persons as the Apostles, and that they preached, and wrought miracles, and planted Christian churches ; which they would never have acknowledged, if the facts had not been incontrovertible. They never attempted to deny them. Their only attempt was to lessen the force of their evidence, and to discredit the miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles, by ascribing them to magic and diabolical influence.

The miracles of Christ and his Apostles could not have been wrought by the power of Satan, because the doctrine to be confirmed by them

was in opposition to Satan's kingdom. Satan cannot be divided against himself ; for, how then shall his kingdom stand ? They could not be wrought by the power of magic. This is evident in the nature of the miracles. No man could do such miracles except God were with him. And, the moment you think of God, you feel constrained to ascribe to him perfect goodness and truth ; and, you are sure that he would not impart his power to enable wicked men to work such a course of miracles to deceive his creatures, in an affair of infinite importance both to his own glory and the eternal happiness of all mankind.

Observe the artless, the simple, yet cogent reasoning on the evidence of miracles, in the man that had been born blind, and whose eyes Jesus had miraculously openedⁱ. *They brought to the Pharisees him that afore time was blind*, who examined evidences with the most cautious jealousy. They who brought the man before them, and who seem to have been of their own party, testified to the truth of the miracle. So did the man who had been healed, and his parents likewise. The Pharisees asked him, how he had received his sight. He said unto them, *He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and do see.* It was the Sabbath-Day, when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, *This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath Day.* Others said, *How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles ?* The force of this question is an assumption that such miracles could not be wrought without the power of God ; and, that God

ⁱ John ix.

God would never countenance an impostor in the very act of violating his law. Therefore, they say unto the blind man again, *What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?* He said, *He is a Prophet.* To this the Pharisees made no reply; but pretended to doubt the fact, whether he had been blind and received his sight miraculously. Therefore they sent for the parents of him that had received his sight, hoping to find some argument to discredit the miracle. But, the parents testified that this was indeed their son, and that he certainly was born blind, though now in some extraordinary way his eyes had been opened. They were afraid to mention the person who had wrought this miracle, because they knew it had been determined in the Sanhedrim to excommunicate any one, who should confess that Jesus was the Christ. Therefore said his parents, *he is of age, ask him.* Then again the Pharisees called the man that had been blind, and said unto him, *Give God the praise;* for, though we cannot deny the fact, nor account for the miracle, *we know that this man is a sinner.* He answered, *Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not;* it is not any point of consideration with me, as a thing of which I am competent to judge by any knowledge of his character previous to this miracle, nor can I allow myself to conclude with you that this extraordinary act of working a miracle of mercy on the Sabbath-Day is really a violation of the Law; but one thing *I know* for certain, as what I myself have experienced, *that whereas I was blind, now I see.* Then they said again, *What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?* He answered, *I have told you already,*

ready, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? Is it that ye sincerely wish to discover the truth, and are ready to acknowledge the force of it, and to become his disciples ? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple ; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses, namely, by the miracles he wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness ; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners, those who oppose his will, his truth, his kingdom and glory, and will never concur with them in their wicked designs against himself : This is as evident as that there is a God who judgeth the earth : but, if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth, and will grant whatever he has promised, whatever tends to the accomplishment of his wise and merciful providence. Since the world began was it not heard, that any man ever opened the eyes of one that was born blind : it is an effect that exceeds all human power, and all magical art ; and, an evil spirit, we are sure, would never do good, nor be permitted to exercise the power of God to deceive us and to render the very evidence of Revelation more than doubtful. You may therefore certainly conclude, if this man were not of God he could do nothing, that is, no such miracle ; and, if you allow the evidence of miracles to determine your belief in Moses, you ought to believe in him that hath opened mine eyes.

Such is the nature and strength of the evidence
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of miracles! False, or pretended, miracles, and juggling cheats, which pass for miracles, may be permitted. They are the natural effects of the weakness and wickedness of human nature. They are consistent with the moral government of God in this world; and, are permitted, sometimes as trials of the faith of the Lord's people, and, as judgments, to punish the sin and folly of men who disregard or forsake the truth of God. But, real miracles, such as this was acknowledged to have been, cannot be wrought without that divine power which constituted the laws of nature and directs the course of the world: and, it cannot be imagined that the power of God will ever operate extraordinarily in any case which is not perfectly consistent with wisdom and truth. The evidence, therefore, of miracles, is nothing short of a divine testimony, that the man, who works them, is of God, a prophet, an apostle, a faithful witness of things pertaining to God.

But, the strength of the evidence of miracles wrought by Christ, and the Apostles in his name, does not consist simply in this, that they were miracles produced by the interposition of divine power; nor in this, that they were such a course of miracles as no other man ever did perform, before or since that time; but, in this, that they perfectly agree with the truth of prophecy. The question to be determined by them was, not whether Jesus of Nazareth was *a* prophet, or a teacher come from God; but, whether he was *the* prophet, the Messiah, the very Christ of God. The miracles wrought by him, and by the Apostles in his name, were exactly such miracles as had been

foretold in ages past ; and, that they should be wrought by him that was to come, that is, by the true Messiah : They were wrought at the fulness of the appointed time, which had been described in the Old Testament as the time of Messiah's advent ; and, when the Jews, in consequence of the prophecies, were in expectation of his coming ; and these miracles were accompanied with every other circumstance by which the prophets had distinguished the appearance and character of the Messiah. These assertions will be found true by every one who shall carefully examine the authentic histories of Christ and his Apostles, and will compare them with the prophecies in the Old Testament. And, having found them true, let him consider the extraordinary and miraculous dispensation of providence under which the Jews were placed, and the infinite importance of the advent of Messiah, and of his being known. It will then appear utterly incredible that the God of Israel, the God of mercy and truth, would, at the very fulness of the appointed time, lend the aid of his own omnipotence to favour the pretensions of an impostor assuming the character of the Messiah. Even the permission of such a deception by the agency of evil spirits, at such a time, and in such circumstances of things, is utterly incredible : For, I must add, the prophecies themselves would become a very uncertain testimony of things future ; and, the principal end, for which the prophetic spirit was given, might be absolutely defeated, if it were possible that all the particular characters of the true Messiah, as delineated by the prophets, could be found in a false Christ ; or, if

if such an impostor could succeed in his attempt to deceive mankind.

I shall not enter further into a disquisition on the truth of prophecy. It will be sufficient to remark, that we have not only historical proof of the truth of prophecy in its accomplishment, but, we see several prophecies, which, we are sure, were delivered many hundred years ago, obtaining their accomplishment in our own times. The Jews exist at this day, divided, separated, and dispersed over all the earth, amongst all nations ; yet, remaining a distinct people, and preserving their national character. This has been called *a standing miracle*. There never was an instance like it. Where are the Romans ? Where are the Danes, the Saxons, the Normans, who settled in Britain ? They exist no more as a distinct people. Yet, the Jews, who are every where dispersed all over the world, are still a distinct people after so many ages ; and neither the various climates of the earth, which affect all other people ; nor the languages and manners of the people amongst whom they sojourn, have had any influence to change their peculiar cast and character. This seems as miraculous as casting a bucket of water into the great ocean, and preserving every single drop of it intire, so that the influence of the sun shall not exhale a particle of this fluid, and so that after many ages, after being wafted from shore to shore, and dashed against the coasts of all the great continents, every drop of it may be collected and gathered up again into the same bucket. But, this instance is not only miraculous : It is an evidence of the truth of prophecy

falling within our own observation and experience ; and, is the broad seal of Heaven authenticating the Bible ; and, it leads the devout mind to rest in the truth of prophecy in expectation of that happy time, which seems fast approaching, when Deliverers shall come and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

It is but a small part of the evidence of the truth of Revelation which I have presented to my Readers. It is that part of the evidence, which seems to be the plainest, and of sufficient force to persuade those who are well disposed. If any one reject this evidence as insufficient, and continue still in unbelief, let him consider whether he do not believe a thousand things to be true upon evidence which has not half the degree of strength in it ; let him look into his own heart, and ask his own conscience, if there be not within him an *unwillingness* to be convinced of the truth of Christianity : let him consider whether this unwillingness be not produced by worldly attachments and strengthened by prejudice ; and whether this bias on his mind and heart have not made him inattentive to the evidence of truth, and disposed him to listen to the cavils of infidelity. He will not thank me for my compassion, but I pity him ; for, while he is so disposed, *neither would he be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

It may be questioned whether there will be an exception of one person who shall ever read this page, that has not, at one time or another, been sensible of the commanding authority of The Word of God, and felt its attracting power, persuading him to obey it in a conviction of its importance

ance and truth. My Reader, perhaps, will not suffer this impression to produce any lasting effect: he may stifle this conviction; he may harden his heart. But, a time will come, perhaps in the awful season when he shall be upon a death-bed, or in the day of judgment, when this Word of God shall revive in his conscience; when, clothed with divine majesty, it will speak so loud within him, that he must regard it. It is in this day of God's patience, that the ministers of mercy can be of any use to their fellow-creatures. They come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts. They solicit, they demand attention: Thus, and Thus saith the Lord—*Repent and believe the Gospel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, that is, Moses, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven.*

CHAPTER III.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES.

IT is necessary to consider what degree of credit is due to translations of the Holy Scriptures ; because a mere English scholar may be discouraged, by conceiving that there is a greater disadvantage, in the use of a translation, than really exists.

It must be acknowledged, every translation of the Bible has in it more or less of human imperfection. And, it may be objected, as a very discouraging circumstance, to the mere English scholar, that he cannot depend upon any version of the Scriptures, as faithfully expressing the mind and will of God ; because, being the work of fallible men, their ignorance, mistakes, and prejudices, will necessarily pollute, in some degree pollute, the streams which flow from the fountain of divine truth. But, a translation, with whatever imperfections, is still a translation of the sacred Book ; and, the most faulty translation, that ever was made of the Bible, hath been found sufficient for every purpose of faith and moral practice. The stream may be disturbed in some passages, and throughout take a tinge of the channel by which

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it passeth to us; notwithstanding, it is the living stream flowing from the sacred fountain of life and salvation.

We are not treating of an original work, a new composition offered to our acceptance, and pretended to be a divine revelation; but, of a translation of the holy Scriptures, professedly such. If any man, or any set of men, were to pretend that any original composition is stamped with divine authority, and were to presume to offer such a composition, as a revelation from God, or as a translation of the Bible, there are thousands who would immediately detect and expose the cheat: It would be destitute of every evidence of authenticity and truth. It could not be received as a divine revelation, nor as a translation of the Bible. And indeed, it seems to be morally impossible, that any one should make this attempt to deceive mankind, enlightened by religion and learning; because there can be no hope of succeeding in such an extravagant design.

The same may be said of a real translation of the Scriptures. No man, nor men, can attempt to falsify every, or most part of the sacred text, in order to recommend or justify private opinions. Such an attempt, in translating the Bible, would be too barefaced an imposition, and could never succeed. Christians do not more differ from the Jews, in their opinions and doctrines, than from one another. Those doctrines, which are in high estimation with some, are reprobated by others with great abhorrence. And, the jealous eye of party zeal would soon detect such a monstrous attempt

tempt to falsify the original text ; and, would expose the design and the authors of it, and the doctrines of which they are zealous, to general contempt*. Besides, we must suppose, that the awful declaration, which concludes the canon of Scripture, is sufficient to operate upon every one who has any conscience, and to guard the Scripture against such a wicked design to corrupt and falsify the text, even if hope of succeeding could prompt any one to undertake it. *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And, if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*

All the imperfections, or errors, which can be supposed in a translation of the Bible, are those only which arise from the genius and imperfection of languages, from mistakes and simple prejudice.

First, from the genius and imperfection of languages. There are many words in almost every language, to which, in other languages, no words can be found to correspond exactly and fully ; so as to express the original ideas in the exact and full meaning, the beauty, clearness, and energy, which the original words express. This, in a special manner and degree, is true with regard to the Hebrew Scriptures and every translation of them into

* Every one knows how miserably Dr. P. has succeeded in his attempt to expunge the beginning of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels ; and that his attempt proceeded intirely from his

inveterate prejudices against the doctrines which appear in these chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, or which are intimately connected with them.

into other languages. The son of Sirach must be allowed to have been a competent judge in this case ; who thus declared his opinion, in the Prologue to the Book of Ecclesiasticus : *The same things uttered in Hebrew and translated into another tongue, have not the same force in them : The Law itself, and the Prophecies, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language.*

Secondly, the imperfections and errors of a translation may arise from mistakes of two kinds. Printing is a late invention. Before this invention, copies of the holy Scriptures were multiplied by the pen of ready writers. Now, it is not possible, humanly speaking, that Scribes, or Copyists, should always guard against mistaking one letter, or one word, for another. They may be guilty of omissions, through carelessness, or inattention ; or injudiciously fill up a supposed defect, or a real chasm, occasioned by the negligence or inadvertency of former transcribers ; or, may introduce words into the text, which had been written in the margin to express the doubt, or the sense of some ancient Scribe or Reader. By mistakes of this kind, the original text, in some passages, may be obscured. And then, again, they who translate from the original Scriptures, may be insufficient to correct these mistakes, in many instances ; and, through their own imperfect knowledge of the original languages, in which the Scriptures were written, they may err in translating some passages, which were never corrupted by former Copyists.

Thirdly, Imperfections and errors may arise from prejudice. If a translator have zeal for any particular

particular system of doctrines, I mean any one of those human systems which distinguish the various sects in Christendom, he will very naturally imagine that some texts of Scripture particularly favour his system. He will consequently express the meaning of these texts more strongly, or with less force, than the original bears, so as will best suit with his own prejudice: and, he will probably give a turn to other texts, whose meaning may be doubtful, by whatever means doubtful, so as to make them favour his own pre-conceived opinions. And, this will happen without any dishonest intention to falsify the Word of God, merely through the bias of simple prejudice. The authors of the translation, which we have in common use, were undoubtedly Calvinists in doctrine, or inclined towards Calvinism, and Episcopilians in discipline. And, it must be confessed, they have sometimes used words and phrases, which favour the doctrines of Calvinism and Episcopacy a little more than the original text does. In the English translation of the New Testament used by the English *Catholics*, there are, through the same prejudice, a few expressions which favour the doctrines of purgatory and image-worship.

But, all these imperfections and errors taken together are the imperfections and errors of a few passages only; few, I mean, in comparison of the whole. They make no alteration of the general sense and meaning of the Scriptures. That is the same, as in the original. In every translation of the Bible that was ever published, there is enough faithfully translated to express all

all the doctrines of faith and manners most clearly ; and, enough to guard us against the inconvenience which might otherwise be produced by the imperfections and errors of particular passages. Even the Jews¹, who have fixed their own sense upon the Old-testament Scriptures, and avoided, as much as they could, giving countenance to Christianity, have left a sufficient number of testimonies unadulterated, to convict them of error, and to establish the truth of the Christian religion.

The worst thing, that can be said of a translation, is, that it is like the wrong side of a fine piece of tapestry, or carpeting ; which expresses indeed all the figures of the piece, and the relative proportions of them ; but, not in that beauty and glow of colouring, and exact symmetry, which may be seen on the counter part designed for observation and critical inspection. On the wrong side of the tapestry, or carpeting, the minuter parts of the piece are not visible.

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¹ The Jews have interpreted the Scriptures, and translated them, as Christians also have done, under the influence of a prejudiced mind. But, it has never yet been proved against them, that they have purposely corrupted the sacred text. However influenced, by zeal for those traditions, which they call the unwritten Law, and by their hatred of Christianity, they still retained so much reverence for the sacred text, for the divine authority of the words and letters of the Scriptures, as was sufficient to prevent this wilful sacrilege. Justin Martyr, who

accused the Jews of perverting the meaning of the Scriptures, yet, makes Trypho reject the accusation of wilfully corrupting them with the utmost degree of abhorrence, as a crime of which they were utterly incapable : “ *This so great wickedness seems utterly incredible : I say, It seems incredible. For, it is a more horrible wickedness than the consecration of the golden calf by those who were miraculously fed with manna ; more horrible than sacrificing children to devils, or than the wilful murder of the prophets themselves.* ”

Much has been said lately about a new translation of the Bible. The subject has been canvassed by the most learned of the present age. After all, it has been acknowledged, that, though a new translation might commend itself to men of letters and taste, it would not be more generally useful; that, though it might excel in giving the sense of some passages, it would probably lose much of that simplicity and majesty which are so happily united in our present English Bible; and, that it could not be made to express more clearly the doctrines of faith and manners.

Through the mistakes, and perhaps the prejudices, of copyists, there are some thousands of various readings in the copies of the original text of the Old and New Testaments. But, change, transpose, and manage all these various readings with as much art as can be used, it will be found impossible to add any doctrine to what we have already in our English authorized version of the Bible, or to suppress any doctrine therein contained. So insignificant are the mistakes and errors of transcribers! When I say this, I bow my head in adoration of the providence of God. A more particular providence cannot be expected, nor desired in this case; because, a more particular providence, to preserve the Scriptures to the only end for which they were given by inspiration of God, is quite needless.

Let me add, on this subject, what may seem to express my own prejudice, but which indeed is the opinion of more capable judges; that there does not exist a more faithful translation, in the whole of it; nor one that comes nearer to the original,

original, than our English version; nor is there one, into which is transfused so much of that wonderful simplicity and majesty which is the character of the Word of God. It is not necessary to make an exception, in favour of the Greek version, commonly called the Septuagint, by which, it has been said, our Reformers were chiefly guided in rendering the Old Testament into English^m, and out of which the Apostles generally quoted in their sermons and writings.

If a translation of the Bible, in which are many mistakes and errors, and passages imperfectly rendered, were insufficient, to answer the merciful purpose for which the Scriptures were written, the Bereans would not have been so highly commended for searching the Scriptures. They had no other Scriptures than the Greek translation of the Old Testament, to the authority of which the Bereans appealed, to decide the important question whether the preaching of the Apostles was the Word of God, or not. And, if a translation, and an imperfect one too, were insufficient; the Apostles would not have quoted proofs of their doctrine from the Septuagint version. But, this they did, both in their sermons and writings: and, they quoted passages which were in correctly translated, whenever the imperfection in those passages did not affect, or destroy the force of

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" Our learned, pious, and ingenuous Reformers were guided chiefly by the LXX, though correcting many palpable blunders in that translation. There are many passages still, incorrectly translated; wide of the true sense, and contrary to it, in some places, in all the versions that I have seen: And what wonder! men are but men; though our translators were no common men."

JULIUS BATE.

their argument. The Reader may see an example of this in Heb. x. 5. which is according to the Septuagint, compared with Psal. xl. 6. which is agreeable to the Hebrew text.

There are very few men in this kingdom, who have derived their light and grace immediately from the original Scriptures; or, by studying the Scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek languages. It is the English Bible, which has been the great instrument of Providence, in preserving the light of traditional revelation amongst us, and in producing the sanctification of thousands and tens of thousands in this nation. This was the Star which guided them to Christ. This was to them the pillar and ground of Truth; by which they were supported under all trials, and in every temptation; by which they lived in hope and died in peace. Their conversion to God, by means of the English Bible, when neither they, nor, perhaps, their teachers, ever read a single sentence in the Hebrew Scriptures, nor in the Greek Testament; their holy lives, formed under the influence and direction of this translation; and, their happy and triumphant exit out of the world; may convince us, that the English Bible, with all its imperfections, is sufficient to make a man wise unto salvation; is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; so that, by this translation alone, the man of God may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

My Reader, I hope, will not mistake my meaning, and suppose that I would exalt the English Bible above the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures,

Scriptures, after their example, who have preferred the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate translation of the New Testament. It is far from my intention to place the English Bible within any degree of comparison with the original Scriptures. I have acknowledged, there are many faults in it. I may hereafter point out some of them, in order to shew the English student how he may overcome the disadvantages which arise from these imperfections and blemishes. My design at present is, to prove that the discouragements, which present themselves to the mere English Reader, are not so many and great as he may be apt to imagine. We are not blessed of God in proportion to our critical knowledge of the learned languages; but rather, in proportion to our humility, and sincerity, and piety in searching after Truth; and, in proportion to our diligence in the use of those means of grace which the providence of God affords us. It is this consideration, which encourages me in all my studies, and in this and every other attempt to promote the interests of religion and virtue.

Know then, gentle Reader, that the English Bible, which lies before thee, contains the inestimable treasure of divine Truth. It is not less precious in itself; and will not fail to enrich thee, though some rubbish be mixed with it; though it have contracted some rust; and, though some part of the superscription be a little obscured, in the long course of years since it was first given to enrich mankind.

If any one could persuade my Reader, that there is some great treasure, a mine of gold or

silver, under the ground he occupies, how would he dig and search for it! If difficulties lay in his way, so that it required great contrivance and labour to come at this treasure, he would plan and scheme, and endeavour by any means, or method, or instruments, to accomplish his design. He would take the best method, and use the best instruments, if they could be procured; but if, in his circumstances, the very best could not be obtained, he would use those which are at hand. Know then, that a richer treasure than was ever concealed in the bowels of the earth, may be found in the holy Scriptures. O, how foolish! how ungrateful! and, how wicked! having these holy Scriptures, and means sufficient, in an English translation, if you will not diligently search them, to obtain this treasure, which obtained, will make you rich indeed!

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

THE UTILITY OF TRANSLATIONS.

TRANSLATIONS of the holy Scriptures were the principal means of bringing about the Reformation. The Bible was translated into English by *William Tindal*, with the assistance of *Miles Coverdale*, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, in the reign of Henry VIII^a. In the preface to the five Books of Moses, the Translator expressed his opinion of the necessity which required the Scrip-

^a This translation was first printed at Hamborough about the year 1532, with prologues, or prefaces, to the several books of Scripture, and with explanatory notes; and was called The Bible of *Thomas Matthews*, because of the odium cast on Tindal, who, while the Bible was printing at Hamborough, was burnt at Antwerp. This translation was afterwards corrected by *Coverdale*, and printed in Paris, under the auspices of *Lord Cromwell*, by *Grafton* in 1540, without the notes. Only a small part of the impression reached England; for, the greater part of it, which consisted of 2500

copies, was publicly burnt in Paris. Not long after, *Grafton*, with his associates, bought the printing pres, and brought it with the printers to London, where this translation was reprinted, and called *The Bible of the Large Volume*. By the King's authority, it was set up in the Churches; and, in the reign of Edward VI, it was ordered to be placed in all Churches, with the paraphrase of Erasmus upon the four Gospels in English, that all ranks of people might have free access to the holy Scriptures, and might hear or read them whenever they pleased.

tures to be presented to the people in their own mother-tongue : “ A thousand books had they “ (*the Papists*) lever to be put foorth agaynst “ their abhominable doynges and doctrine, then “ that the Scripture should come to light. For as “ long as they may keepe that down, they wil so “ darken the right way with the mist of their fo-“ phistry, and so tangle them that either rebuke “ or despise their abhominations, with arguments “ of philosophie, and with worldly similitudes and “ apparent reasons of naturall wisedome, and “ with wrestyng the Scripture unto their owne “ purpose cleane contrary unto the proceffe order “ and meanyng of the texte, and so delude them “ in descantyng upon it with allegories, and amuse “ them, expoundyng it in many sences before the “ unlearned laye people, (when it hath but one “ simple litterall sence; whose light the owles “ can not abide) that thoughe thou feele in thine “ harte and arte sure how that all is false that “ they say, yet couldest thou not solve their sub-“ tile rydles. Whiche thyng onely moued me to “ tranllate the New Testament. Because I had “ perceaued by experience, howe that it was “ impossible to stablish the laye people in any “ truth, excepte the Scripture were playnely layd “ before their eyes in their mother toung, that “ they might see the proceffe order and meanyng “ of the texte : for els what soeuer truth is taught “ them, these enemies of all truth quench it agayn, “ with apparent reasons of sophistry, and tradi-“ tions of their owne makynge, founded without “ grounde of Scripture, and partly in juggling “ with the texte, expoundyng it in such a sense as “ is

" is impossible to gather of the texte, if thou see
" the proceſſe order and meanyng thereof."

This worthy attempt to enlighten the nation, by laying open the Scriptures in a translation to the reading and scrutiny of every one, who could read his own mother-tongue, was crowned with success. The lay people eagerly read the English translation of the Bible; and, multitudes, in a short time, became wiser than their teachers. Their teachers, in general, knew little more of the Scriptures, than certain portions of them introduced into their service-books; and no more of the meaning of Scripture than what they had learned in the sophistical comments of the schoolmen. Whereas, the lay people now read the whole Bible in a faithful, though imperfect, translation; in which they could compare one part with another, which is the best method of studying the Word of God.

The truth, which they sought, was disputed by the Papists and the Reformers; and, they could not depend upon either, to guide them into the true meaning of the Scriptures, without giving up the opportunity of seeing with their own eyes and judging for themselves, that is, without giving up the best means of information, and committing themselves blindly to the one party or to the other. They had, therefore, no other refuge than in God himself, the giver of all grace, to assist them in their sincere inquiries after truth. To Him they looked and prayed, while they searched the Scriptures, in the English Bible; and, through His blessing, they were enlightened and made wise unto salvation. The consequent effects prove this:

A large portion of the primitive spirit of Christianity revived in the nation. That heavenly mindedness; that contempt of the world; that holy walking with God, which the light of truth, the knowledge of Christ, never fails to produce, plainly marked the character of thousands, who, before, were involved in the dark night of error and superstition^o.

These circumstances of things in former times will justify my earnest endeavours to persuade every one to SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES. The effects will be exactly the same, and equally fatal, whether we be deprived of the use of the Scriptures by ecclesiastical authority, or, by any means, are brought to neglect the reading, studying, and searching these sacred records. The Scriptures are neglected: We do not study the Bible with sufficient attention and diligence. The Word of God has lost its authority. And, what is the consequence? We are sunk into a miserable state of ignorance, superstition, and profaneness; into a careless observance of the outward forms of godliness and a superstitious confidence in them. We hear, and do not obey. In vain do the sincerest preachers of Christianity quote chapter and verse, to prove any doctrine which militates against the

^o When the translation of the Bible was placed in the Churches, crowds of people assembled, and one or other of them, who was qualified to act the part of a Reader, read the Scriptures to them audibly: and, so eager were the people to possess a copy of the English Scriptures, that a load of hay is mentioned as the price at

which a few leaves of St. Paul's Epistles were purchased. We have in Fox's Book of Martyrs a large collection of Epistles written at the time of the Reformation, which breathe the genuine spirit of Christianity, and express that holy faith which sought illumination from heaven in the diligent use of the English Scriptures.

the prejudices and passions and evil practices of their audiences ; for, not knowing the analogy of faith, and being ignorant of the order of the text, its connection, and its dependence upon what goes before, the proof is lost, and the people hear without conviction. At the same time, and for the same reason, a crafty, plausible, or noisy preacher, whose whole design is to draw away disciples after him, and who speaks to the prejudices and passions of his hearers, shall be received as an oracle ; and the people will imagine he has fully proved his false or perverted doctrine by the mere jingle and sound of scriptural words and phrases : They will assent to any argument, which has only the appearance of truth, if it tend the way in which their prejudices lead them, and gratify the conceit of extraordinary wisdom. They have neither disposition, nor patience, to search after the meaning of Scripture, and eagerly catch the sound of words detached from the context, as if that sound were of necessity an echo to the sense of the inspired writer. This is the true ground of the prevalence of Socinianism and Antinomianism in the present day.

Here is a man, who makes high pretensions to zeal for Christianity : He professes to be a sincere lover of Truth ; and, to be influenced by the purest motives. He talks loudly, and with much concern, of the corruptions of Christianity ; and makes a great parade and shew of learning and reason, in his professed attempt to detect error and to deliver us, as he pretends, from the prejudices and superstitions of the darkest ages. In this way, he would prejudice his hearers, or read-

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ers, in favour of himself; whose minds and hearts are already too much disposed to favour a doctrine, which conceals the extreme evil of sin, and hides from their view the wretched condition of human nature which required so great a sacrifice as that of the Son of God.

As if he could perfectly comprehend God, he determines, by philosophical reasons, that there cannot be any kind of plurality in the mode of existence of the supreme Being—he determines, that God is absolutely, abstracted from every distinction, and metaphysically, One—he determines, that our Lord Jesus Christ must be, and was, and is, absolutely, in every sense of the word, a *mere* man. To justify his notions with an *appearance* of scriptural authority, which is necessary to impose his opinions on those who profess to believe the Bible, he appeals to 1 Tim. ii. 5, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* They who have never examined this text, and know nothing of the context, the drift of the Apostle in this part of his Epistle, are at once staggered; and they, who are already prejudiced on the side of Socinianism, immediately conclude that this text is a full and decisive proof of the unity of God and of the mere humanity of Jesus Christ, in the Socinian sense of these terms. They are deceived, partly by the confident boldness with which the appeal is made to this Scripture in proof of Unitarian opinions, and partly by the jingle and sound of the words. But, if the context be examined, and no other meaning put upon the text than what the context gives, it will appear clearly that St. Paul, in this passage, no more

more thought of the unity of God and of the mere humanity of Christ, in the Socinian sense of the terms, than he thought of the Newtonian doctrine of light and colours. Now an Omer is the tenth part of an Ephah, might have been quoted, in proof of Unitarian opinions, with as much real propriety, though not with so much *shew* of propriety, as this text in St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy.

Antinomian Teachers set out with very high-founding professions of zeal for the exalted character of the Lord our Redeemer. They insist strenuously that Christ hath fulfilled, or obeyed, the moral Law, or Law of nature, for them, or in their stead. And, in order to magnify the importance of his mediation, they insist that by believing this opinion, which they call *faith*, they are perfectly holy and righteous in Christ by imputation, that is, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, his active and passive obedience to the said moral Law for them; so that personal holiness and righteousness cannot be required of them, and are not necessary to their eternal salvation. They quote those texts of Scripture, in which believers are said to be delivered from the Law^p, to be dead to the Law^q, and in which the Law itself is said to be dead^r. They never consider, nor do the people apprehend, the various senses in which the word *Law* is used in the Scriptures. What St. Paul affirmed in a particular and limited sense, they interpret generally and without limitation. He spake of the removal of things which may be shaken, the typical

^p Rom. vii. 6. ^q Rom. vii. 4. Gal. ii. 19. ^r Rom. vii. 6.

pical dispensation ; and they confidently assert the removal of those great things of the Law which cannot be shaken, and which must remain as long as the world endures. What the Apostle affirmed of the Law, as a covenant of *works*, they apply to the Law in every sense whatever. What he spake of the Law in the *letter*, they apply equally to the *letter* and *spirit*. What he said of the Law as a temporary expedient, and in reference to the Jews as a schoolmaster to *them*, they apply to all people in every age of the Church. They never consider that the Apostle's idea of deliverance from the Law, and of being dead to it, was perfectly consistent with his being still under the Law to Christ, that he might live unto God, by obeying the Law, not indeed in oldness of the *letter*, but in newness of the *spirit* : nor do they reflect that his idea of the imputation of righteousness is perfectly consistent with this awful truth, that every one of us shall give account of himself to God, and that Christ shall judge, and will reward, every man according to his works. Could the Law be made void, abrogated, and destroyed in every sense whatever, Heaven would perish with it ; for, a rational nature cannot be restored to happiness in God without personal obedience : it must be conformed to the dispensation under which it is placed, and willingly subjected to the divine Law and government.

The Antinomian scheme rests intirely upon a perversion of the Apostle's arguments, on the subject of justification ; and upon texts of Scripture detached from the context, and applied to a purpose quite foreign to their meaning as they stand in

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the sacred Scriptures. It is a scheme, which conceals the importance of the Christian graces and virtues, and the necessity of a holy and righteous life. It renders vain all exhortations to humility, self-denial, and mortification. It teaches people to neglect the means of grace, and to look upon the forms of godliness with no small degree of contempt. It even condemns, as a *legal* spirit, that holy zeal which diligently follows after righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, patience, meekness ; while, at the same time, it seems to give the highest glory to the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God. It therefore commends itself to weak and prejudiced minds, and to those especially, who would reconcile God and Mammon, and sleep secure in their sins ; because they can be unchristian under a specious appearance of zeal for Christ, and carnal under the highest pretensions to spirituality.

It is not enough, if we quote the words of Scripture ; but, the sense and meaning of Scripture must be produced. It is the sense and meaning of Scripture which is the Word of God, and which is to be the object and standard of our faith, and the rule and measure of our practice. A text may seem to mean very differently, when detached from the context, from what it signifies in connection with the preceding sentence, or when the drift of the whole passage, to which it relates, is carefully examined. The instances just now produced are in full proof of this observation ; and, innumerable instances might be produced from the various creeds, systems, and opinions of the sects, which are multiplying every day ; in which the words

words of Scripture are brought to prove what the meaning of Scripture will never countenance.

The utility, therefore, of a translation of the Scriptures, is obvious. It is the necessary means of information to the generality of people, when one cries, *Lo, Here*, and another *There*. But, translations of the Scriptures are means, which, as all other good things, may be perverted and abused.

The danger of perversion and abuse of the holy Scriptures, renders it necessary that I recommend to my Reader's careful attention, whenever a text occurs, or is produced in proof of any opinion, to influence his faith or practice, that he examine the text as it stands in the Bible, and not as it may seem to relate to some creed, or system, or favourite opinion. This is the only way to be preserved from the contagion of erroneous doctrines, from enthusiastic zeal, from groundless fears, from presumptuous hopes, and from misconduct. Be particularly careful to observe, whether, in any quotation from the Scriptures, there be not some word added*, or left out, which may make a material alteration of the sense, and produce a fatal misapprehension of the mind and will of God.

Satan quoted Scripture, when he tempted our blessed Saviour. *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot*

* An Antinomian preacher *nor any other creature*—he added, quoted Rom. viii. 38, 39. *For NOR SIN—shall be able to separate I am persuaded that neither death, us from the love of God, nor life, &c. nor height, nor depth,*

foot against a stone. This is, indeed, Scripture ; but, not the meaning of Scripture. A very material part is omitted. He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee *in all thy ways.* This was omitted by the Tempter. God has promised that his people shall be safely kept, while they walk in their ways. *There,* in the path of duty, nothing shall by any means hurt them. But, if they go out of their ways, in which Providence has set them, and in which the Word of God directs their conduct, there is no promise that they shall be safely kept ; but, quite the contrary.

Suppose, for example, that the Tempter had pushed our Saviour from the pinnacle of the temple : Undoubtedly, the promise of safe keeping would have been fulfilled : No evil consequence would have followed. This the Tempter well knew. Therefore, it was no more in his will, than it was in his power, to use such violence. He can prevail, only by tempting to the actual and voluntary commission of sin against God ; by enticing us *out of our ways.* And, had this temptation so far prevailed, that Christ had cast himself down presumptuously in vain-glory, he had then fallen beyond the reach of this blessed promise.

Inattention to the meaning of the Scriptures has been the fountain of much mischief, both in principle and practice. If the Scriptures were diligently studied, people would not be so easily led astray : they would not be divided, without end, into so many sects : nor would they ever have used such unguarded expressions as these, Christ is a *mere man* ; We have nothing to do with the Law ; The Old Testament is nothing to us ; Sin can do us

us no harm, for believers are perfectly holy and righteous *in Christ*—and, other expressions there are, equally absurd and blasphemous, when used without distinction and limitation.

The Papists reproach us for our many sad divisions, and say, All this comes of your laying open the Scriptures to the common people, without an infallible interpreter to direct their faith. But, the reproach, though deserved, is misapplied. The abuse of God's creatures must be imputed to the folly and wickedness of men, and not to the bounty of the beneficent Creator: He still supplies us with meat and drink, though men abuse them to gluttony and drunkenness.

The Scriptures have, indeed, been laid open; but the people have shut the Book again; or, which is the same thing, do not read the Scriptures with sufficient attention and reverence. And, there never was a time, when it was more necessary to cry aloud to every one, *Tolle, Lege*—Search the Scriptures; Examine for yourself; Read your Bible; Read and pray. Every one, almost, has his *Paul*, or his *Apollos*, or his *Cephas*, or his *Christ*, as the head and very God of his sect or party. Every one has his Commentator, his Expositor, his Body of Divinity, his Confession, or Creed, or System, the Standard of his Orthodoxy, to which he pays infinite regard, and knows nothing of the meaning of Scripture, but what he sees through these *media*, as in a deceitful mirror. He is enslaved by prejudice to human systems and the authority of fallible men, and reads the Scriptures with their eyes and through their spectacles, which shew him the words of Scripture, but pervert

vert their meaning; just as the Divines before the Reformation saw all they knew of the Scriptures in the writings of the school-men, who applied the sophistical logic of Aristotle to accommodate the Scriptures to a false philosophy, and to the secular interests of a corrupted Church.

This is the cause of the multiplication of sects: not the free use of the holy Scriptures; but, the neglect of them, without which they could not have been so much perverted and abused. Every one, who sets up for a teacher, easily gains proselytes to his opinions by some new pretension to greater purity of doctrine. The mere jingle and sound of scriptural words and phrases pass as a sufficient justification of his pretension, with those who have only a superficial knowledge of the Scriptures, and will not study their *meaning*.

But, if the Scriptures were read in the manner which the Scriptures prescribe^t, the Holy Ghost would be an infallible interpreter to them who observe the prescription. And, if due regard were paid to the whole counsel of God in the Old and New Testaments, it would plainly appear that Christianity is not the religion of nature, or natural religion perfected by revelation, or Deism further extended, which is the erroneous opinion of Socinian writers, but is the Jewish Church perfected by grace; a continuation of the same holy society, under the same merciful government, administered in a more open and general dispensation, it would appear, that the whole of Christianity consists in *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, in a conviction

^t See Prov. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. James i. 5, 6.

tion of sin, and departure from all iniquity, and in such an apprehension of the character of Christ, as will inspire love to God in the blessed hope of immortal life—it would appear, that the only true worship of God essentially consists in the holy union and fellowship of the Saints, exemplifying a spiritual life formed on the model of the divine Law, and copied from the example of the Lord Jesuſ—and consequently, it would appear, that every thing else is unworthy of the zeal of an eager disputant, and of so little importance, whether true or false, that it can never justify the party-rage, the animosities and divisions, which subsist in *Christendom*.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

IN calling the Scriptures *The lively Oracles of God*^u, “is comprised all that can be said of the great importance of these Sacred Writings, and of the necessity of their being generally read and carefully studied.”

There are some, who will acknowledge the New Testament, or part of the New Testament, deserving of this high appellation; while they place the Old Testament, especially the Law of Moses, nearly on a level with Rabbinical divinity, or regard it as of little or no importance to Christians. But, those Scriptures, which, in the New Testament, are called *The lively Oracles of God*, are the writings of Moses and the Prophets. These were the Scriptures to which our Saviour referred, when he said, Search the Scriptures, for *they are they which testify of me*. When the two disciples were going to Emmaus, he said unto them, Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And, beginning at *Moses*, and *all the Prophets*, he ex-

pounded unto them, *in all the Scriptures*, the things *concerning himself*. And afterwards, in the midst of his disciples, he said, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written *in the Law of Moses*, and *in the Prophets*, and *in the Psalms*, *concerning me*^w. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand *the Scriptures*, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and *Thus* it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem^x.

In like manner, the Apostles, both in their preaching and writings, continually referred to the Old Testament, as the Oracles of God. They constantly instructed both Jews and Gentiles out of the writings of Moses and the Prophets; and proved all their doctrines by them. And, it was in consequence of this appeal to the Old Testament, that the Bereans^y searched the Scriptures to know the truth of those doctrines which they had heard.

The Apostles affirmed, *Whatsoever things were written aforetime*, under the Old Testament dispensation, were not written merely for the instruction of those who lived under that dispensation; but, for the instruction of the Christian Church, that *we* through patience and comfort of *the Scriptures* might have hope^z. They alledged the examples of the Old Testament believers;

^w Luke xxiv. 26, 27.

^x Luke xxiv. 44, 45, 46, 47.

^y Acts xvii. 11.

^z Romans xv. 4.

lievers; All these things happened unto them *for ensamples*; and they are *written for our admonition* upon whom the ends of the world are come^a. The Old Testament Scriptures, they affirmed, were sufficient to *make a man wise unto salvation*^b; that *these* Scriptures were *given by inspiration of God*, or, as St. Peter expressed it, *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*^c. They insisted on the sufficiency of the Scriptures of the Old Testament for every purpose of religion; *profitable for doctrine*, to teach whatever a Christian man ought to know and believe to his soul's health; *for reproof*, to confute errors, and to suppress heresies; *for correction*, to reform and amend whatever may be amiss either in principle or practice; *for instruction in righteousness*, to reveal the wise, and righteous, and merciful providence of God in his various dispensations, and to teach every one how he ought to walk and please God; and finally, to be a *storehouse*, out of which both ministers and private Christians may furnish themselves *completely* for the Christian warfare, and in which they may find directions and motives to *every duty*.

After such a commendation of the Old Testament Scriptures delivered by Christ and his divinely instructed Apostles, and such an example of the use of these sacred writings, it will be unpardonable, if we suffer ourselves to be prejudiced against them; if we do not make them the objects of constant attention, meditation, and study; and read them diligently and reverentially; not as the writings of men, but as *the lively Oracles of God*.

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^a 1 Cor. x. 11. ^b 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17. ^c 2 Peter i. 21.

As the writings of men, they would deserve great attention, because they are the oldest writings in the world, and the only writings which give any true and certain account of the first ages. These were called *The fabulous Ages* by the learned Gentiles; because they had no authentic histories of the origin of men and nations, nor of the early events of Providence. They had only some traditional notices of the primitive condition of things ; and these very imperfect : and, so disguised were they, by the imaginations of their Poets and Philosophers, that they deserved no more credit than the fabulous adventures of romance. Yet, if nothing more could be urged, than that the Old Testament contains the truest account of the first ages, the oldest and truest history of mankind, it would be no more than an argument to excite our curiosity, and little worth insisting upon : but, as containing *The Word of God*, or a revelation from God, delivered in an historical account of things ; and, in which we are all interested and infinitely concerned ; the argument comes home to every one's heart, and demands the most serious attention to be paid to these sacred writings.

The great utility and profit that may be obtained by hearing and reading the Scriptures, no heart can sufficiently conceive ; much less can my pen express. Never was there any true knowledge of God, profitable to the salvation of men's souls ; never was there any true virtue in any one of the human race, tending to his *eternal* happiness, which was not derived either mediately or immediately, from the revelation contained in the Books.

Books of Moses. And, it is a certain fact, which commends the Holy Scriptures as of the greatest importance to mankind, that true religion and righteousness have always existed in exact proportion to the study and knowledge of the Word of God. Those nations which do not possess this inestimable treasure, and are ignorant of the revelation contained in the Scriptures, have ever been in the most deplorable condition of moral darkness, superstition, and vice. And, those Christians, who neglect the study of the Scriptures, soon become either wild enthusiasts, stupid formalists, or profane sensualists.

No wonder, therefore, that the enemy of men's salvation has ever sought, by various stratagems, to drive the reading of the Scriptures out of God's Church. The Prince of darkness has too well succeeded, by this mean, in his malicious design to corrupt and destroy Christianity. By exciting a foolish affectation of philosophical wisdom, supported by an unwarrantable liberty and luxuriant fancy in interpreting the Scriptures; then, by taking away the Bible from the common people; and, by leading the very ministers of Christ to employ their talents in studying the writings of Aristotle and of the Schoolmen, which should have been employed on the Scriptures themselves, the fountain-head of truth, he introduced that dark night of the Church, which for some ages preceded the Reformation.

But now, since the Reformation, that saying of the great *Chillingworth* is become a maxim with us, *The Bible is the Religion of Protestants*, that is, we derive our principles from the Scriptures;

we do not allow any doctrine or practice to be enforced upon our consciences, as necessary to our salvation, which we cannot find in the Word of God. As this is our maxim, it is not in the power of Satan to wrest the Bible out of our hands: He can no longer make it heresy, or a proof of heresy, to read the Bible. But, by some means or other, he has prevailed on Protestants, either to neglect the Scriptures, or to be partial in God's law, that is, to set up one part of the Bible in rivalry of the other, the New Testament in preference to the Old, as of greater importance and superior authority; and, which is equally fatal, if not much more fatal, to set up something called *Reason*, *The Light of Nature*, and *Natural Religion*, as of prior authority to Revelation; and then, in reverence of this authority, to study the perversion of the sacred text; for, unless it be perverted, the attempt to lower Christianity to the system of Deism, or to graft Christianity upon natural religion, will be found impossible.

CHAPTER.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY READ AND STUDIED.

CONSIDERING the ease with which copies of the sacred Scriptures are multiplied since the invention of printing, and the cheapness of printed copies—Considering the care which has been taken to assist the unlearned by faithful translations of the Bible—Considering that the Scriptures in the original languages are to be found in every library, and in almost every private study, and translations in every family; (for, we should think our houses unfurnished without a Bible) it might be supposed that biblical learning has widely diffused itself among all orders and degrees of men in Protestant Countries ; and, when any one boasts that this is *an enlightened age*, it might well be imagined that he intends to express a great progress in the science of Christian theology. But, it may be doubted whether the present professors of Christianity in Protestant Countries, possess half so much knowledge of the Scriptures as those Churches, or Congregations, in the first ages of Christianity, whose common treasure consisted in a single manuscript.

That

That manuscript was, not only carefully preserved by those Christian societies, as a sacred deposit, and as the *Magna Charta* of their common privileges, enjoyments, and hopes, but, ministers, under the denomination of *Readers*, were appointed to read the Scriptures to them diligently in their assemblies. They met together as frequently as possible for this exercise; until the Scriptures were imprinted on their memories, and the truths contained in them filled and sanctified their hearts. They thus became like trees growing near fertilizing streams, which appear in perpetual verdure, and bend their vigorous branches under a load of precious fruit. But, we modern Christians place curious editions of the Scriptures on our shelves, more for ornament than use; and keep the Bible in our houses in compliment to the religion of our country, and to the profession of that Christianity which we have received by tradition from our forefathers. And, so far is it from their design, who boast of the age as singularly enlightened, to insinuate an opinion of any diffusion and increase of the heavenly wisdom; that they rather mean to express a vast increase of scepticism, and of that daring presumption^d which looks with indifference, and even with supercilious contempt, on the Bible; and which plumes itself on a liberty, unshackled by pious prejudices, in doubting and disputing the truths of Revelation.

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^d In the camp of infidels, and of their auxiliaries the pretended friends of Christianity, this presumption is called *Philosophy*, often a simpering Coquette in a meretricious dress; and, sometimes,

a demure Prude affecting chaste and refined sentiments of virtue, but filled with licentious imaginations; and, in practice, an arrant Prostitute.

There was a time, when the children of our nobility, of gentlemen, merchants, tradesmen, mechanics, and husbandmen, were all taught to read in the Psalter, the New Testament, and the Bible. This was the ground-work of all the learning in the nation ; and, of all the religious knowledge and Christian virtue, which our forefathers possessed. While they were learning to read in the holy Scriptures, some rays of light were communicated to their minds ; some portions of divine truth were treasured up in their memories ; their consciences were awakened to a sense of their accountableness to God ; restraints were laid upon their passions, and principles established, which, however disregarded in the days of giddy youth, yet, in some future concurrence of providential events, often acquired a mighty force sufficient to produce a sincere conversion to God. But now, it seems, we are become wiser than our simple forefathers. French philosophy has taught some of us to aim at making our youth *the children of nature*, rather than of *grace*. The Bible is not thought a proper book of instruction ; and, for this reason, along with others of less importance, lest the minds of our youth should be *prejudiced*, and superstitiously inclined, by instilling into them the principles of revealed religion. A multitude of little books, besides those of *Mrs. Barbauld* and *Mrs. Trimmer*, are introduced into our nurseries and schools, to succeed in the place of those antiquated books the Psalter, Testament, and Bible. It is but justice, to confess that some of them, and those chiefly which are here specified by the names of their authors, have a considerable share of merit,

rit. But, had they much more excellence than they can pretend to have, they would be miserable substitutes for the sacred Scriptures ; and, there would be much reason to lament, that, in proportion as we have obtained easier methods of learning, we have lost the most useful information ; and, in the same degree that we have cultivated elegant and ornamental literature, we have lost the most solid knowledge, which infinite Wisdom thought to be most necessary and tending to the eternal happiness of mankind.

The circumstance before mentioned, that almost every family in the kingdom possesses a copy of the Scriptures ; and, that we should think our houses unfurnished without a Bible ; may be urged as a proof that there is a greater and more general reverence for the Scriptures than I seem to suppose. But, if we do not esteem the Scriptures according to their importance to us, and in proportion to the divine authority with which they are commended to our regard ; if we do not use them to the end for which they were ordained, to make us wise unto salvation ; if we neglect to study them as *the Oracles of God*, and they have little or no practical influence upon our lives ; then, that appearance of reverence for the Scriptures is no other than a blind, superstitious prejudice. It is true, we keep the Bible in our houses ; but, can it be said, that we treasure up the contents of this sacred book in our hearts ? Is our delight in the Law of the Lord ? And, are the all-important subjects of it our continual meditation ? How very few are there, who search the sacred records with a pious thirst after the heavenly

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ly wisdom, to understand the whole mind and will of God, to improve their hearts, and to direct their steps in the ways of godliness ! If we read a chapter on the Sunday evening, we satisfy our consciences with this occasional exercise ; or, we read some of the historical parts of the Scriptures, now and then, as an entertainment. But, this dipping occasionally into the Bible, turning to some favourite passages, and culling texts which seem to justify pre-conceived opinions, are not sufficient to answer the ends for which the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God. In this way, people may read the Bible, year after year, and all their lives through, and yet be never the wiser nor better men. It is but too evident, what little good effect is produced by this partial, desultory reading ; for, in general, Protestants are now as ignorant and superstitious as the Papists ; altogether as worldly-minded ; and, I fear it may be said, are less Christian, that is, have a less zealous regard for Christ and for Christian morals.

It would, indeed, be monstrous superstition, to suppose that the Bible in our houses will be a *palladium* to preserve our families against fevers, fire, and thieves. And it would be an equal degree of superstition, to imagine that the Bible will act as a charm, and inspire us with heavenly wisdom, if we sometimes deign to hold it in our hands and to look into the sacred book. The Bible cannot have any more virtue of this kind than any other volume. If we would understand an Act of Parliament, we are not contented with reading a sentence here, and a paragraph there ; but, we read the preamble, and the subsequent clauses in order : we carefully read

read the whole: And, if we would understand, and profit by perusing the sacred code, we must read the whole book of God; we must study the language, and search diligently to understand the meaning of the *Scriptures*; we must treasure up the contents of these sacred writings in our memories; we must meditate upon them continually; and compare them with our daily observation and experience.

To assert the necessity of this diligent study of the *Scriptures*, is no infringement upon the office of the Holy Ghost. It is true, the *Scriptures* must be read, if we would read them profitably to our soul's health, with the assistance, or under the influence, of the same divine Spirit by whose holy inspiration they were at first given to mankind. But, to expect an immediate inspiration, or a direct revelation of God's truth, is to look for what God has no where promised; and which, indeed, would be inconsistent with the plan of Providence in giving the *Scriptures* for our instruction: And, to think of obtaining heavenly wisdom, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, without our own diligent endeavours to understand the *Scriptures*, and the same exercise of our natural faculties which we employ on any other writings, would betray the same folly and presumption, which he would be guilty of, who should expect that the heavens will cause a rich crop of grain to cover our wild commons, and other lands, which have never been cultivated by human skill and industry.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GENERAL NEGLECT OF THE SCRIPTURES NOT SUFFICIENTLY COMPENSATED BY SERMONS FROM THE PULPIT.

IF the Clergy were to perform the office of the *Readers* in the primitive Church ; if their parishioners assembled to hear the Scriptures read to them, as much, and as frequently, as in the first ages of Christianity, and with the same thirst after knowledge, and with the same eager desire to treasure up the contents of the sacred book in their memories ; if, to this exercise, the Clergy added catechetical instruction, to ground them well in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ ; and, if their sermons from the pulpit were faithful expositions of the Scriptures, and the subjects of them judiciously applied to the workings of the human heart, and met the various trials and temptations of their hearers ; then would our Churches be, what they ought to be, *Schools of heavenly wisdom* ; and the Bible would not be so necessary a part of the furniture of every private family. But, this is not the case ; nor can it be expected.

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It was the scarcity and the expensiveness of copies of the Scriptures, and the charitable design of communicating the knowledge of them to the poor and illiterate, which introduced the office of *Readers* into the Synagogue, and afterwards into the Christian Church. But now, when copies of the Scriptures are easily multiplied, and may be purchased at a small expence, the office of *Readers* is laid aside, as no longer necessary. We have only two chapters, one out of the Old Testament, and another out of the New, read once a week in our parish Churches, at morning and at evening prayers^e, with two other smaller portions in the communion-service; and, so nearly extinguished is the primitive zeal for Christian knowledge, these chapters and smaller portions are heard with very little attention.

It cannot be supposed, that the Lessons, the Epistle and Gospel, which are read on a Sunday, so unconnected as they are, and so little regarded, are sufficient to produce any adequate knowledge of the Scriptures, or any proper conception of the divine dispensations. And very little more advantage, if any, is to be expected from our pulpit discourses. This is not said on a presumption that the Clergy deserve all the severity of *Mr. Cowper's* satire. But, allowing that their sermons are learned and elegant compositions; and, that their public discourses enter much deeper than they do into the marrow of Christian divinity, and are delivered with all the zeal and pathos of

St.

^e In many Churches, there is noon; and in some country service only once on a Sunday, Churches only once in a fortnight in the morning or after-night.

St. Paul, still it will be true that their sermons cannot compensate the general neglect of reading and searching the holy Scriptures. For, the doctrines we would inculcate from the pulpit, are either grounded upon and proved by principles of reason and natural religion, or are commended to our hearers by authority of texts quoted from the Old and New Testaments. If upon principles of reason and natural religion, we must of necessity overshoot the generality of our hearers; or, if they be able to comprehend our argument, still they will remain unedified in Christian knowledge, that is, in the knowledge of those most important truths which depend intirely upon the authority of Revelation. We are to be teachers of Christianity; and, not of philosophy. And, if our people be not built up in the holy faith of Christian doctrine, they may become vain Sciolists; but, can never be well-informed and holy Christians. If we attempt to teach them by quoting texts of holy writ, they cannot feel the force of our reasoning out of the holy Scriptures; because they are too little acquainted with the Scriptures, and cannot weigh our proofs in the balance of the sanctuary. Having never read the Scriptures with sufficient attention, they cannot readily apprehend the connection and dependance of one part of the Scripture upon another; and, therefore, cannot perceive the full sense and meaning of those texts which are brought in proof of our doctrine.

If the sincerest preachers of Christianity can do no more good by their sermons than in proportion as they engage the attention of their hearers to the authority and subject-matter of the Book of God,

we ought to persuade our parishioners to search the Scriptures diligently, in order to satisfy themselves of the truth and importance of Revelation ; and so that they may be able to perceive and judge, whether we speak the bare words of Scripture, or, whether we build the doctrine, or enforce the practice, we would commend to them, upon the true and genuine meaning of the sacred text. Until this be done, we may puzzle and perplex, we may delude and mislead our hearers ; we may lead them blind-fold ; but, our sermons from the pulpit cannot reach their hearts and consciences, so as to produce those effects which might be expected, considering the nature and importance of Christianity. And for this reason ; because Christianity, in experience and practice, is founded in knowledge, and not in ignorance ; in conviction of the truth, and not in doubt and uncertainty : it is rational piety, or piety becoming reasonable creatures ; and not stupid formality, nor wild enthusiasm, springing from slavish fear and superstitious reverence for the decisions of human authority, for ancient customs and traditional opinions.

In order to supply the want of reading, or the defect of it, when it falls short of the necessary degree, we should frequently bring forward in our sermons an historical account of the various dispensations of Providence recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and shew their harmony and union in the one simple and grand purpose of the divine mercy : and, should endeavour to imprint on the minds of our hearers the analogy of faith ; that they may perceive the consistency and unity of design in the writings of Moses, and the Prophets, and

and the Apostles of Jesus Christ; and, consequently apprehend the grandeur and vast importance of Christianity. We should never introduce into the pulpit any thing like philosophical disquisition; but, should express, with the utmost simplicity, those distinguishing doctrines of Revelation, which are equally interesting to every one, in every age, and under every dispensation, and which relate to the whole of our existence in time and eternity. Instead of quoting single texts in proof of any doctrine, we should produce whole passages of Scripture, and so largely as may be necessary to bring the meaning of the particular texts upon which the proof of our doctrine rests, fully into the view of our audience; and then illustrate and confirm the meaning of these texts by pertinent examples and parallel passages in the Old and New Testaments.

This method of teaching will necessarily be diffuse. Discourses on this plan will be destitute of the brevity and elegant simplicity of those compositions which are called *Essays*, and which are too commonly the style and character of sermons in the present day. But then, to counterbalance this defect, our sermons will be very instructing to the generality of our hearers; the contents of the Bible, by degrees, will be familiarized to them; and our hearers will begin to understand the general scope of the Scriptures: The importance of those doctrines which they hear from the pulpit will excite in them a desire of further information; and, with the assistance of the clew which has been given them, they will begin to search the sacred records with a hope that will inspire cheerful diligence,

gence, until their minds be enlightened and the Day-star arise in their hearts.

There is another method of teaching, recommended by the incomparable *Monsieur Daillé*, which would be attended with the happiest effects, if the abilities and diligence of our Ministers were equal to the undertaking. He greatly blamed the Preachers in the Roman Church for explaining, in their public discourses, only some pieces and shreds of Scripture, sometimes taken from one book, sometimes from another, and never shewing their hearers any complete body. To take a view of an intire book of Scripture, will have a happier effect, than considering any one part of it alone, and taken from the whole. This method of teaching is also commended by the practice of the Primitive Church ; for, it was frequent in the early ages of Christianity for Ministers to expound in the Church whole books of Scripture throughout, in sermons continued upon the chain of the holy text from the beginning of the book to the end of it. We have still extant the Sermons of *St. Chrysostom* upon the Book of Genesis, upon the Gospels of *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, upon the Acts of the Apostles, and upon each of *St. Paul's Epistles* : and we have the Tra&tates of *St. Augustine* upon the whole Book of the Psalms, upon *St. John's Gospel*, and upon his first Epistle : All which were delivered to a vast concourse of people in the Churches where these great men presided.

These examples shew the method of teaching which obtained in the earlier ages of Christianity : and, no better method can be propos'd, to lead those who have only an imperfect knowledge of the

the Bible into a comprehensive view of the contents of the sacred Books. For, he that will undertake to expound any book of Scripture in order, must of necessity apply himself diligently to understand the book he would expound ; he must examine all the various parts of Scripture with which his subject has any relative connection ; and, in the course of his exposition, must bring these various parts of Scripture fully into the view of his audience, and, as it were, concentrate all the rays of the light of Revelation.

The method of taking a single text, sometimes here and sometimes there, is very convenient to them who preach occasional sermons, and to itinerant preachers : It is convenient to them who are bigotted to some particular opinions, or partial to one or another of those human systems which distinguish the sects into which the Church is unhappily divided, because they can more easily shun the light which would expose the weakness of their system : It is convenient to them who wish to conceal the great truths of Revelation, or rather their own dislike of them : It is convenient to unlearned and lazy preachers, who choose a text merely because they can write or speak something fluently upon it ; but it leads to superficial and unprofitable discourses. It is the practice of too many in the present day, to adopt a text, merely as *a motto* to their composition ; like a scrap of Latin taken from some classic author, which a school-boy prefixes to his theme. They determine upon their subject first of all, perhaps compose the discourse, and then look for a proper motto. If the general sense of the words carry a distant allusion to their

subject, it is sufficient: they read it in the pulpit, and sometimes take not the least notice of its connection in the Scriptures, nor of the design of the sacred writer. This practice deserves severe censure. This is not expounding the Scriptures: It is pouring contempt upon the Oracles of God. The discourses of such preachers are often ingenious and elegant, but have no weight in them; they fall far short of the importance and grandeur of Revelation. They are argumentative; but, without any divine authority. They please the fancy; but, are destitute of apostolic energy. They are brilliant; but, pour no evangelical light into the mind: Perhaps, are pathetic, but do not sanctify the heart.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLEA OF THE UNLEARNED.

SOME people excuse themselves for neglecting to search the Holy Scriptures, by alledging their want of abilities. They think a great share of human learning is necessary to the right understanding of the Word of God ; and, that the Scriptures are so hard to be understood, that none but Philosophers, and those who have taken degrees in the Universities, are qualified to study and explain them. They see a vast variety of opposite opinions concerning points of doctrine, which are evidently of the greatest importance : and, they suppose that this is owing to some obscurity in the Scriptures, and to a want of sufficient abilities to discover the true sense and meaning of them. They, therefore, imagine that it is their best wisdom to remain in ignorance. They dare not search the Scriptures in order to inform their understandings and determine their judgment, lest, at the hazard of their salvation, they fall into fatal errors in making the attempt. They therefore submit implicitly to vulgar opinions, or to the precepts of the established religion, whatever it may chance to be, or yield

themselves to the persuasions of any bold enthusiast in whose favour they may chance to be prejudiced.

He that can read the Scriptures in any language in which they were ever presented to mankind, is sufficiently qualified to learn and understand them, so far as is necessary to make a man wise unto salvation. It is not any obscurity in the Scriptures, nor the want of great abilities, which is the cause of error ; but, the want of diligence and of a suitable temper and disposition.

When people take up prejudices in favour of any erroneous system, and look into the Scriptures for no other purpose than to confirm their opinions by accommodating the sacred text to their prejudices, it cannot properly be said that they read, or search, or study, the Scriptures ; for, though they see the letters and words of the sacred book, they pay no regard to that sense and meaning of them which is the Word of God : for, the words and sentences are not the Word of God, but the truths which the words and sentences were intended to convey to the mind and heart. And, when these truths are not sought after, nor regarded, they who are stuffed with prejudices will find enough in the Scriptures, which, detached from the whole, shall seem to echo their preconceived opinions.

If any seek to exalt themselves, by any knowledge they may obtain by reading the Bible, that knowledge will be such as will blind them the more. And this would be their case, if they had ever so great a share of human learning to bring with them to the reading of the Scriptures, as many

many great Doctors have found to their cost. Presumption and arrogancy, self-conceit and self-sufficiency, or self-seeking in vain glory, which are ever accompanied with invincible prejudices, are the parents of almost all the disputes which have disturbed the peace of the Church and divided it.

But, Humility needs not fear any evil. Humility, ever accompanied with godly sincerity, will only, and simply seek to know the Truth ; will search and compare one part with another ; and, above all things, will read with bended knees, and supplicate the Father of Lights for the heavenly wisdom. And He, who never failed them that diligently seek Him ; and, who ordained the Scriptures to enlighten the ignorant, will cause them to give understanding to the simple. But, can it be expected (since it would be contrary to the course of God's general providence in the world) that the careless and profane reader of the Scriptures, or he, whose prejudices, or his lusts and passions, dispose him to pervert the meaning of them, should ever obtain from them that divine wisdom, which is utterly inconsistent with his views and designs, and with the whole frame and temper of his soul?

The Scriptures are a revelation indeed ; but, not to the wise and prudent ; who are so already in their own eyes, and too proud to learn. From these the Truth is hidden, and revealed only to babes ; who, void of prejudice and self-conceit, search the Scriptures with child-like simplicity, and earnest desire, and sincere intention to know and to do the will of God. *Chrysostom* is quoted in our Book of Homilies, saying, " Man's human " and worldly wisdom, or science, is not necessary

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“ to the understanding of the Scriptures ; but, the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspires the true meaning into them that seek after it with humility and diligence.” In this respect, the learning of the Scribes and Pharisees gave them no advantage above the vulgar Jews : It did not tune their ears to distinguish the voice of the Prophets, nor give strength and clearness to the eyesight of their minds, to perceive the meaning of the Mosaic dispensation.

Think not then, that human learning is privileged to enter the Holy of Holies, and to pry into the mysteries which are concealed in the sacred tabernacle. Far from it. Men of the greatest parts and of the greatest acquired abilities, may remain for ever ignorant of the heavenly wisdom ; and, the most learned scholar in the world, without something more than human learning, is as incapable of opening the seals of God’s book, as they are, who can only read it in their mother-tongue. And, does not matter of fact prove this ? For, on every doctrine of importance, men of the greatest abilities, and the most learned scholars, have disputed with one another, and proved by their tempers and conduct, that great parts and good sense, that learning and truth, that knowledge and wisdom, may never meet together in the same person.

The Scriptures were designed for general use ; for the lower orders of society as much as for the rich and noble and men of splendid talents. And if we were obliged to follow implicitly any interpretation of the Scriptures, it should be theirs who have the fewest prejudices to bias their minds. It has always been found, that the sense of any passage

passage of Scripture, relating to faith and manners, which is obvious to the generality of mankind, that is, to the unlearned, is the true meaning of it.

And this, by the way, produces an argument, which has great weight in it, That those doctrines which explain away the divinity of Christ, and the reality of the atonement, cannot be the doctrines of God's Word; because they are not obvious to the unlearned; and, because it requires a vast deal of subtlety, and skill in the *art* of criticism, to interpret the Scriptures with any appearance of consistency, so as to justify a system in which the divinity of Christ and the atonement are not the most important articles.

As for the many things hard to be understood, consider that diligence will surmount the greatest difficulties; and, that the Scriptures are full of low vallies and plain paths, in which every man, with God's blessing, may safely walk; as there are high hills and mountains, the summit of which few men can climb. It is not by climbing to these heights, that any one will secure his eternal salvation; but, by walking uprightly and perseveringly in the plainest paths of truth. The first principles of the doctrine of Christ are as milk, the food with which children are nourished; and, the deeper mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven are, in comparison, as strong meat, which is proper for those who are grown to a state of maturity. They who cannot digest the strong meat, may drink the sweet and sincere milk of the Word, till their faculties acquire a perfection of strength by use and exercise, when the stronger food will suit them. There
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will then be no pretence for complaining, that there are in the Scriptures some things hard to be understood; for if we faithfully receive the food which is proper for us, our stomachs will not surfeit, nor our heads turn giddy.

It is a vain pretence with which some people excuse their ignorance, that they have no time for the acquisition of knowledge. But, is any one subjected by the necessity of his condition to *unavoidable* ignorance? Have we no other guide, but accident and mere chance to conduct us? Or, are the current opinions, and the licensed guides of every country, sufficient evidence and security to every man, to venture his most important interests upon them, even his everlasting happiness or misery? Surely, not. God has given a revelation to mankind, and furnished us with sufficient abilities to understand it, if we seriously employ our faculties in a dependence upon his grace and blessing. And, no man is so wholly taken up with attendance on the means of living here, as to have no spare time at all to care for his soul, and to inform himself in matters of religion. Were men as intent upon this, as they are on things of lower concernment, there would be none so enslaved to the necessities of life, who might not find many vacancies, which might be husbanded to this advantage of their knowledge. Were they to employ those vacancies in searching after truth, and the seventh portion of time, in which the laws of the land oblige them to abstain from their worldly occupations, they would have as many hours in a week for learning, as are generally devoted by all the men of science throughout Europe,

rope, allowing for a few exceptions. That every one has time enough, who will diligently improve the time he has, may be demonstrated by repeated facts; for, many of the poorest labouring people have been known to search and study the Scriptures; and, to acquire abilities to teach others also. And, if tradesmen and mechanics would improve their moments of leisure, especially the Lord's Day, they would find that they have time, abundantly sufficient, to acquire a large stock of the most useful information. It is universally true,

The Diligent shall be made fat.

No objections can be offered against reading and studying the holy Scriptures by people of every degree, which will have any weight in their estimation who consider the divine command to search the Scriptures; and which is tacitly implied in that merciful Providence which gave us the Scriptures in our mother-tongue. Nor are any difficulties to be mentioned which are not counterbalanced by this consideration, that the divine assistance will accompany our sincere endeavours; and, by the consideration of those advantages which are proposed to excite our diligence.

It is not a speculative knowledge of things, a mere science, which is obtained by the sincere and diligent reader of the Scriptures; but, wisdom, heavenly wisdom; that divine virtue, which is called *Faith*: it is that spiritual understanding, that spiritual discernment and taste, which apprehends and favours the things that be of God: which subjects the soul to the divine will, and draws the heart from earth to heaven. A man may have itching ears, and multiply teachers, and

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be running every day to hear sermons, without any goodness or holiness of heart and life. But, no one can read the Scriptures with diligent and serious study, to know the will of God, without being divinely good, or becoming good in a more eminent degree. It has been often observed, that men, who had only a common share of understanding, and who had no more acquired ability or learning, than was just sufficient to enable them to read the Scriptures in a translation, have attained, by a diligent application to their Bibles, not only an eminent degree of piety and goodness, but, an accurate judgment of persons and things; a remarkable propriety of conception, and a prudence in the economy of human life, far superior to what is sometimes seen in persons in higher stations, whose time and abilities have been otherwise employed.

Let not my Reader, therefore, be discouraged by any apprehension of difficulties; but rather, let him diligently apply himself to search the Scriptures with attention and reverence, and with a lively hope of the happiest success. The Scriptures are the wells of Salvation, ; the fountain of all the spiritual light and life that is in the world. Whatever good can come to us, to make us wise, and holy, and happy, here and for ever, must be derived to us through the Oracles of God. This is the Star that guides men to Christ, and directs their feet in the way of peace: the Staff that supports the many painful steps they must take through this wide wilderness; the Food of immortality; and, the only Cordial that can cheer them in their dying hour.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IX.

PREJUDICES WHICH HINDER THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

WHOEVER considers the miserable condition of those nations of the earth upon whom the light of Revelation never shined, or amongst whom, in consequence of a total apostacy, that lamp of heavenly day has been utterly extinguished, may be convinced of the insufficiency of human nature to enlighten itself. From age to age, and from generation to generation, they wander on still in darkness. No example to the contrary was ever produced in the history of mankind. No example has been found of any nation, or tribe, or family, or even of any one single person, that ever recovered the knowledge of God by self-exertions, or without foreign aid. They neither hear that voice, which is said to be uttered by all the works of God; nor see those footsteps of His divinity, which are impressed in the ways of His providence. They see nothing but confusion, clouds, and darkness, on the whole face of nature; and, the genial warmth of heaven no more inspires them with religious sentiments, than it inspires the tiger basking on a sunny bank. Nothing can be more contrary

contrary to the experience of mankind than saying Truth shines so bright in their view as to become irresistible.

“ All Thy works praise Thee, O God—
 “ They are Thy witnesses, who speak Thy power
 “ And goodness infinite; but speak in ears
 “ That hear not, or receive not their report.
 “ In vain Thy creatures testify of Thee
 “ Till Thou proclaim Thyself.”

But, they whose hearts abound with a lively faith, immediately discern the whole system of things to be no other than the workmanship of that God whom they adore. To these the Heavens declare the glory of God; and, all Nature speaks in their attentive ear of its almighty and most bountiful Creator.

“ A voice is heard, that mortal ears hear not,
 “ Till Thou hast touch'd them; 'tis the voice of song,
 “ A loud Hosanna sent from all Thy works;
 “ Which, he that hears it, with a shout repeats,
 “ And adds his rapture to the general praise.
 “ In that blest moment, Nature, throwing wide
 “ Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
 “ The AUTHOR of her beauties.”

Not that every one, who is in some degree enlightened by Revelation, has this devotional apprehension of the existence, the power, and providence of Almighty God. They believe, philosophically, there is a God; and, that the works of creation, and the course of nature, proclaim His Being and Providence: but, the impression is transient; and, has no practical influence. They are convinced, but not converted.

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We are born in a country where Christianity is the general profession. We are instructed from our earliest infancy to believe the general principles of Revelation; as, that there is a God, who made and governs the world; that the world, and every thing in it, demonstrates his existence and his providence; that God is to be worshipped; and, that the worship and service, most pleasing to Him, consists in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. We are taught that these are indubitable principles. And, having no recollection of any time when we were ignorant of these principles, nor observed any progress in our knowledge of them, they appear to us as self-evident truths: we imagine that we should have known and been certainly persuaded of them, if we had been born and bred where the light of Revelation never shines. These principles, therefore, are regarded, not so much as dictates of Revelation, as of a natural light shining every where, and enlightening all mankind.

We have remarked, in a former chapter, that this prejudice has been turned against Revelation; and, is the ground of the most specious and subtle opposition to the Christian religion. Men of a lively genius, fond of venturing into the wide ocean of speculation, and thinking to distinguish themselves by new discoveries in conjectural theology—and they too, of a less brilliant genius, whose earth-encumbered souls revolt from those truths of Revelation, which mortify the pride of the human heart, and restrain its corrupt inclinations—have asserted, that unassisted reason is sufficient to discover God, and all the fundamental

mental principles of religion and morality. This notion has produced a philosophical religion called *Deism*, which pretends to be the result of mere rational inquiry, though, in fact, every ray of light of which it boasts is derived from Revelation. Deism, so far as it is Truth, is Revelation; and Deism had never been, if that religion to which it is opposed had not had a prior existence.

Unfortunately, those learned men, who have stood forth the Champions of Revelation, have imprudently met the Deists on their own ground. They have allowed the very principle on which Deism intirely rests, the pretended light and religions and law of nature. The consequence has been, as might have been expected: Instead of recommending Christianity to the acceptance of infidels, by representing Christianity as an improvement of Deism, and the perfecting of the religion of nature, they have given great advantage to the enemy; and, the multitude of infidels has increased daily.

It is well known to be a fashionable opinion, and generally insisted upon by our polemic divines, that man, by the exertions of his reason, without the aid of Revelation, can find out God, his essential and moral perfections; that there is such a thing as natural religion; that Revelation stands upon the basis of natural religion, and perfects that system. Strange infatuation! to believe that God has revealed what we already know, or might know, without revelation! and which, it is allowed, if we sincerely believe, and practise accordingly, is sufficient to recommend us to the approbation of Heaven! Strange infatuation! in

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an age, when all systems in philosophy, built on hypotheses, are acknowledged to be no better than ingenious romances! and, when the principle of knowledge in philosophy is the observation of facts and certain experience! Why then do they bring hypotheses into the Church, and disturb the peace of Christians by their theological romances?

They tell us, that the being and unity of God is a first principle of natural religion. But, is this agreeable to matter of fact and certain experience? Are there no Atheists in the world? Are there not tribes and nations, who have no knowledge of the being and unity of God? and, who have no word for God in their language? Are not the greater part of mankind Polytheists? and, is not Polytheism much less like a corruption of the notion that a Being, who is metaphysically one, created the world, than of this most ancient and scriptural Truth, that the ALEIM of Israel were the creators of it? Was there ever a Deist, but amongst corrupt and degenerate Christians? or, any system of Deism, ever found amongst the Heathen, to which our Deists will subscribe?

So far is it from being true, that there ever was such a thing as natural religion, matter of fact and certain experience testify, There never was any thing like religion in the world, excepting Christianity, and the wretched corruptions of it, and of the Jewish and Patriarchal religions, which were essentially the same as the Christian. And yet, we are told, that we must first establish principles of religion, as reason, or rather as imagination, shall dictate; for, without principles we

cannot reason; and then, when we have formed a system of natural religion, we are to interpret the Scriptures by it. However difficult to wrest a text from its plain and obvious meaning, it must be done, to accommodate the Scriptures to what are called *Reason* and *Natural Religion*. Hence Socinianism. Hence the opposition to the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and Divine Influences. If we speak against their abuse of reason, they immediately cry, You speak against reason itself, the noblest gift of God. And yet, we are only exposing the folly and presumption of their theological romancing; and require that men believe no more than what matters of fact, and certain experience will justify.

To justify *their* notion of the sufficiency of reason, they urge, that, in the constitution of this world, the great Creator hath amply provided for all his creatures; that the world is a magazine of means, containing a rich provision for its inhabitants, and an abundance of remedies for their accidental wants; that their bodily powers and instincts are exactly suited to their various orders and conditions, and to the use of the means provided for them; that, after the strictest examination of their several faculties, we cannot conceive an alteration or improvement in any of them for the better, to answer the end of their being; that no extraordinary interposition of divine Power is necessary to their preservation, or to the acquisition of that portion of happiness which the great Creator hath allotted for them; and, that to ask for what they have, or to pray for more, are both alike absurd and vain.—If this be true of the creatures

tures in general, why make an exception of man? Is man supreme in poverty? Does he alone stand in need of an extraordinary and miraculous interposition of Providence? While every other creature is naturally furnished with powers to distinguish and know his proper good, and with a disposition to pursue it, and with abilities to attain it by the use of natural means, does man alone want an extraordinary revelation to discover his supreme felicity, and an immediate communication from the Deity, to excite him to pursue his best interests, and to enable him to attain the end of his being? What would this be, but saying God made man less perfect in his kind than other creatures are in theirs? Would it not be saying, The work of God, in forming the human species, and in making provision for man, was originally defective, and wants amendment? And, to affirm this, would be little less than imputing a want of wisdom, and a defect either of goodness or power, to the all-wise, all-bountiful, and almighty Creator.

This argument is plausible; and would be unanswerable, if the object of Revelation were simply the interests of human nature in the present world; if it were pretended that a revelation is wanted, or hath been given, to instruct us how to live the life of nature, how to eat, and drink, and sleep, and how to secure and improve our political interests; that is, if the doctrines of Revelation were the doctrines of mere morality.^f “God,

^f “ Morality is a conformity of “ which we stand to each other
“ our actions to the relation, in “ in society. Religion and Mo-
rality

" no doubt, made us as is best for us in our " present condition ; " and hath fitted our senses, " faculties, and organs, to the busines we have " to do here." But, will it follow, that our senses, faculties, and organs, are fitted for the spiritual world ; either to discover that there is a spiritual world, or to form any fort of connection with it ?

It is ignorance, or a misapprehension of the nature and design of Revelation ; it is ignorance of the proper condition of human nature ; it is the blunder of confounding together, as one, the material and spiritual systems, the present and the future worlds—It is this ignorance, this misapprehension, or misconception of things, this confounding together things which are perfectly distinct, and which have no necessary connection, nor any natural relation to each other ; which have given occasion to the objection against revelation, that it implies a defect in man's original constitution, and the insufficiency of his reasoning powers, to provide for himself, and to answer the end of his creation. But, revelation does not imply any such thing. For, however perfect man was formed, as an inhabitant of this world ; and however sufficient his reason to secure his best interests

" rality differ in the motive. They " are just as far asunder as hea- " ven is from the earth. Mo- " rality finds all her motives *bene* " *below* ; Religion fetches all " her motives from above. The " highest principle in Morals is " a just regard to the rights of " each other in society." (*i. e.* expediency, public and private utility). " The first principle in

" Religion is a regard to the re- " lation we bear to God, as it is " made known to us by *Revela-* " *tion*." Where Revelation is not, there may be Morality, and there may be Superstition ; but, there, Religion can have no ex- istence.

*See a Charge of the late BISHOP
of ST. DAVID'S.*

terests in it; it can never be inferred from this, that he is qualified for a superior station in the higher scale of existencies, or that his reason is sufficient to secure the advantages of another world to which he is not naturally related.

The faculties of his body and mind are fitted for this world, and limited to his interests in it. He can make a balloon, and raise himself a little way above the surface of the solid earth; but cannot reach an higher station in the universe: he cannot break his connection with this world, of which the surrounding atmosphere is a part: he must come down again without having discovered a single object that was not visible to him before his ascent. He can build a ship, and sail round the world; but cannot extend one inch beyond it. He returns; and, all that he has seen is no more than he had seen before; land, and water, and the distant sky. And, the faculties of his mind, his reasoning powers, are as limited as those of his body. He cannot descry a single object beyond the material system; and, he has not any means, by which he can make a voyage of discovery⁶ into another world; or by which he may

⁶ In truth, it is not the office of reason to make discoveries. Columbus did not discover America by reason. He knew, what experience had taught mankind, that many parts of the known world were once unknown, and had been progressively discovered. He knew that the ocean extended far West from Europe, and East from Asia. He knew that the earth is spherical; and that the Western and Eastern oceans must

meet, or be intercepted by large portions of land. He knew that, sailing due West, he should either reach the Indies, or meet those large portions of land, which might possibly intercept the Western and Eastern oceans. He launched forth into the Western ocean and discovered America, imagining that he had reached the Indies. He made this discovery, not by reason, but by experiment.

obtain knowledge of the spiritual system by experiment.

He has no natural knowledge of God. He has no innate ideas of any kind. If he form any ideas, it is by experience through the medium of the senses. But, by experience, he cannot form any idea of God at all; for God is not an object of sense. Having heard of God, that a Being exists, whose nature is perfectly different from any thing of which he has any experience in this world, he may, after that, reason about his existence, &c.; but would never have thought of such a Being if he had not heard. Just as people living under the torrid zone, having heard of Ice, may reason about it, and believe there is what is called *Ice*, water rendered solid, but would never have thought of such a thing, if they had not heard of it. They may, I said, *believe* there is Ice; but, *cannot know* that it really exists. So men may believe there is a God, but cannot know that He exists, unless He reveal Himself through some medium to our senses, and give us certain experience of His being and providence, as He did to the Patriarchs, to the Children of Israel, and to the Prophets. The report of His existence, at second hand, may be credible according to the nature of the evidence and the circumstances attending it. It may amount to a degree of probability nearly equal to the degree of certainty produced by experience. But, if it be a vague report, such as the tradition of His existence, which came down to the ancient philosophers, and even such as is conveyed to modern speculators who reject the evidences of Revelation, then, in this case, reason cannot

cannot conclude upon the subject. The mind may be swayed by the probabilities of reason, and give a doubtful assent, or even be prejudiced in favour of the proposition that There is a God ; or, the mind, impatient of more probabilities on so great a subject, may reject the truth of the proposition, and say, " There is nothing certain."

And, What say our modern philosophers ? " A God, or not a God ? a providence, or not a providence ? a future state, or nothing future ? a soul, or mere organized matter capable of thought ? immortality of the soul, or absolute extinction of all being in death ? The balance is even : neither scale preponderates : all is involved in doubt and uncertainty." The philosophical mind is suspended. It can detect gross absurdities, and sophistical errors, but not its own. And, What was the result of the inquiries and disputes of the ancient philosophers ? Did they not end in the same uncertainty ? or, in this humiliating truth, *The world by wisdom knew not God* ? And, What are we to conclude from the infinite variety of opinions on metaphysical, spiritual, or divine subjects ? What, from the gross ignorance and stupidity of the multitude ? from the superstitions and idolatries, which abound in all parts of the world ? Can we conclude less than this, that religion is not natural to man ; that the objects of religion exceed his natural powers, and are inconsistent with his natural propensities ? Hence it is, that the opinions of mankind, upon the most important subjects, have been so infinitely various : hence it is, that religion has been so multiform : hence it is, that what are called the very

very first principles of religion are so uncertain ; hence it is, that man, departing from Revelation, could never recover what he had lost, nor improve the imperfect truths which remained, or which had come down to him by tradition. Truth eludes his most diligent researches. And yet, there are thousands whose prejudices persuade them, that religion is natural to man.

But, the propensities, the instincts and dictates of nature, are simple and uniform in their operations and effects. They are the same in all men : they tend towards the same objects ; and equally affect men in every age and climate of the world. Therefore, that which is called *Natural Religion* cannot be the religion of nature, because the general mass of mankind are incapable of comprehending its principles : For, “ I scruple not to assert that no “ proof can be more subtle in its process, or in its “ principles more abstruse, however just in its con-“ clusions, than the arguments which philosophy “ furnishes, of the being and attributes of God, “ and the immortality of the soul. By mere ar-“ gument, therefore, addressed to their reason, no “ conviction could be wrought in the minds of “ the common people, of the very first principles “ of religion.”^h And, if religion were natural to man, and necessary to his well-being in the present world, and in relation to his interests in it ; then all men would be religious, without either compulsion or persuasion ; and, their religion would be uniform : They would all attain to the knowledge of God : Their apprehensions of his character

^h Charge of the late BISHOP of ST. DAVID'S.

character and will would be clear and consistent; and, they would reverence and obey God as naturally as they reverence their parents, and as naturally as they obey the calls of nature in eating, drinking, and sleeping. It cannot be supposed, that man alone, of all the creatures in this world, would miss his supreme good: and, if it consisted in religion, he would seek it in the practice of true piety with the same readiness, and attain it with the same certainty, in general, with which the beasts pursue and attain theirs. Or, if man were necessarily, or naturally, connected with the world of spirits, he would be spiritually minded: he would not turn his affections wholly to the things of time and sense: he would not be prone in all his natural tendencies towards the earth: he would naturally aspire after the spiritual life, its support and increase; and he could not miss his aim.

The natural and political virtues of men meet their natural and proper rewards here, in this life, and have no relation to a future state, by any natural constitution, or necessary connection. If men have acted their parts well upon this stage, will it follow necessarily, that another stage must be built for them, upon which they shall act other parts, in another drama, in another world? It might as well be pretended, that the innocence of a sheep, the domestic virtues of a dog, the industry of ants, the economy of bees, and the policy of beavers, must be rewarded, and the sufferings of these animals be compensated, by raising them up to an higher condition of being in a future state. And, to suppose, that man hath any natural or necessary relation to another world, or can unite
the

the material and spiritual systems in his own person by any powers or virtues properly his own, would be attributing opposite principles and qualities to the same nature, a mixed mode of existence, earthly and spiritual, to the same *human* being: It would be confounding together, things perfectly distinct, the first and the second Adam, this world and that which is to come.

Man, therefore, *is of the earth, earthly*¹; as the beasts also are. Both he and they were formed upon the plan of this world^k. He has no natural relation to any other; and, therefore, the God of nature did not endow him with any faculties proportioned to the condition of another world. His instinct and reason cannot extend themselves beyond the limits of that system with which he is connected by the bonds of nature^l. But, it will not follow from this view of man's earthly condition, that there is no future state, or that the soul will not survive the dissolution of the body, or that there will be no resurrection of the dead.

It may be the will of God, and a part of the original plan of His providence, which may be one in Him, though perfectly distinct with respect to us, that some of His creatures shall be translated from a low condition of being in this world into a higher

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

^k See Ecclesiastes iii. 18, 19.

^l "For as nothing can dispose a being to act above its condition and nature, but the assistance of a superior agent: so in man, nothing can enable him to do those things, which are above his capacity, but the supernatural influence of God."

"The soul may have activity

"and powers to receive and contemplate truths when revealed, though no part of its original furniture: and, it only follows, that man could not find out his duty and his God without assistance; and that the discovery of the divine Will is supernatural."

ELLIS.

a higher condition of being in another world. It may have been one part of this plan, to teach these creatures their frailty and dependence by actual experience ; by placing them in the most perfect happiness which their condition in this world was capable of receiving, and then suffering them to forfeit this happiness and their life by actual transgression of some positive precept. It may have been part of this plan, that these creatures should learn the evil of sin in their sufferings ; and, that they should first be dissolved and buried in the earth, and then be raised up to the superior mode of existence, after the perfect consummation of that system of things to which they were naturally related. It may be necessary that these creatures know the design of Providence, in relation to the future world, that this knowledge may become a principle of conduct, and put them into a preparatory course of training for that higher condition ; or, to give them an incipient participation and pledge of the future life, preparatory to the full and perfect enjoyment of it.

In this case, it becomes necessary that God reveal Himself and the counsel of His own will to these creatures : and, it may be equally necessary that He reveal Himself and the design of His providence through the medium, whatever it be, by which the plan of His merciful and gracious providence shall obtain its full and perfect accomplishment. It may be utterly impossible that they should receive this revelation from God, and comprehend the plan of this extraordinary providence, unless the Revelation be communicated to them through a Mediator. Their natural virtues simply

as creatures, inhabitants of this world, and their political virtues as members of society, can have no principle in them congenial with the future state, or that will connect them with the future world. But, if the Mediator connect the material and spiritual systems in his own person and character, then, by means of this Revelation, those for whom he mediates, may become connected with both systems, or with both worlds, in Him. They may derive a title to the future life from his mediation ; and, a foundation may be laid for a spiritual regimen and government, under which habits of virtue may be formed, upon the principles of this revelation, which shall perfectly agree with the spiritual and eternal life : In other words, by believing this revelation, and by faith in this Mediator, these creatures may become religious, holy, heavenly-minded, spiritual, and, as the Apostle expresses it, *new creatures in Christ Jesus.*

It is highly probable, that this revelation will bear a strong analogy to, and correspondence with, the system of things to which these creatures are naturally related ; being both of them the contrivance of the same all-perfect wisdom and the effects of the same almighty power : therefore, they, who shall be enlightened by this revelation, will see many probable evidences in the material system, that He in whom they believe is the Author of Nature—they will discern many sensible evidences of the greatness and glory of God in His works : and these will attest His being, His perfections and providence. And, the duties prescribed to the creatures thus enlightened, will probably appear extremely reasonable to them, as a natural

natural consequence of their relation to God and to one another, separate and distinct from the consideration of His revealed will. But, these circumstances, so favourable to the truth of Revelation, are liable to be perverted. The very strength of the conviction produced by the attestation of the works of God may lead these creatures to imagine that His works are sufficient of themselves to reveal His being and perfections; and, that all the duties which are necessary for them to know and practise, in relation to the future life, were deducible from their natural relation to God previous to any revelation. And they will be the more likely to fall into this error, because their natural propensities draw them down to earth, and tempt them to prefer the system of nature in every instance to the dispensation of grace.

At first, perhaps, they will hope to recommend Revelation to the acceptance of infidels, by insisting on the evidences and probabilities which they discern in the material system, as arguments of the truth of Revelation: they may think to justify and guard the doctrines of Revelation by reason and philosophy. Some, perhaps, will be captivated by the evidences and probabilities of reason, as means of gratifying an ardent curiosity and the pride of learned investigation; and these, bye and bye, may forget that they are indebted to Revelation for all they know of God and the future state. And, it is not improbable, that some of them will wander so far into the regions of speculation, till they turn against Revelation and oppose the evidences and probabilities of reason, to prove that it is unnecessary, and therefore no revelation from God;

while

while others, retaining a prejudice in favour of Revelation, may attempt to lower the standard of revealed truth to the scanty measure of philosophical speculation, and reduce the sublime doctrines of Revelation to what they will call *Reason* and *Natural Religion*. And, because the system of nature is very imperfectly understood, and the greater part of the chain of causes and effects is absolutely concealed from our view, so that there is not a single object in the universe which we see, or can see, in all its relations, therefore many things appear to our dim sight utterly unaccountable : many things seem to be without design, and unworthy of a perfectly wise and Almighty Creator : some events seem to happen by chance, and their existence to be inconsistent with the belief of a superintending providence. Hence it may come to pass, that they who have rejected the evidences of Revelation, and who attend more to the difficulties they meet with in the investigation of nature than to the probabilities of truth, may be disposed to doubt of every thing which relates to the being and providence of God and a future state. And, it is very probable, that, in a time of general depravity, when the passions of men are freed from the restraints of conscience, when Revelation has been greatly corrupted, and when religion has been disgraced and rendered odious by the iniquity and hypocrisy of its professors, some of these speculative men will dare openly to profess their infidelity, and even to boast that they are Atheists.

The intelligent reader will perceive, that, in making the suppositions which have been expressed in several preceding paragraphs, it was intended

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to describe what has really happened. And an appeal may be confidently made to the history of man, and of the Church, and to every one's observation and experience, for the truth of what has been advanced.

It may be proper to add, more explicitly, that there is the same perfection in man's nature, and in all the faculties of his body and mind, to attain and secure his best interests in *this* world, as there is in the nature and faculties of all other creatures to attain theirs; and, man no more stands in need of any addition, or alteration, nor of any extraordinary revelation, *to this end*, than they. The faculty of reason is perfectly sufficient for him; and is no more defective in man than what is called instinct is defective in the beasts. So much may be said of man in regard to his natural life and the present world. And, though this world, and his interests in it, be the whole of man, according to the course of nature; yet, there may be a system of grace, perfectly distinct from every thing in nature. And, therefore, in relation to this system, man must submit to be taught by Revelation. For, though his reason cannot discover any thing beyond this material system; though it cannot invent or form any connection with another world, nor establish any ground of merit to deserve immortality and eternal life; yet his reasoning powers render him capable of receiving instruction; of receiving impressions and ideas of spiritual truths by analogy, or by means of types and metaphorical representations. And, in the use of his faculties of body and mind, he can examine the evidences of Revelation; and, if he be

modest and humble, can form a judgment of the importance of its doctrines and the excellency of its precepts.

But, it was a fatal mistake, when what is called *natural religion* was supposed to have real existence independent of Revelation, or as a dictate of nature, and was made the foundation and support of revealed religion; whereas, in truth, revealed religion had a prior existence. Revelation inspired mankind with the knowledge of God, and then taught them to see and adore His eternal power and godhead, His excellent greatness and wisdom, in all those mighty works which are the operation of His hands. That first mistake produced another, viz. That the future state, which Revelation disclosed in the knowledge of God, or the life of man in another world, will be a continuation, or the renewal, of the present mode of human existence, or of the present life perfected *in its kind*, privileged with a progressive degree of science, with perpetual duration, and uninterrupted self-consciousness. This mistake is merely a modification of the philosophical opinion of the immortality of the soul, or of a future state necessarily depending upon the nature of the soul as an immaterial substance, and of the happiness of that state as a just reward of moral virtues, the virtues of men merely as men, acting well their parts in the drama of human life. These mistakes, these philosophical conceits and blunders, introduced into the Church, have produced a compound of Morality and Religion, of Philosophy and Revelation, of Heathenism and Christianity.

But, Christianity stands alone upon its own proper

per basis, the authority of Revelation—a revelation of things which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*^m i. e. which he never did discover, and could never know by any other means. Christianity cannot stand upon any other foundation than this ; and, the attempt to establish the truth of Christianity upon any other foundation, will turn out, in the end, to be building nests to hatch Infidels, Deists, and Socinians. And, when these are produced, ye grave Divines, expend all your ammunition, all your learning, in a trial of skill to shoot them. But, it will be in vain. These birds were quickened by your own principles : they are secure upon the ground which you yourselves have cleared and fortified for them ; and there *your* artillery cannot reach them : they defy your skill, and flap their wings at your follyⁿ.

The future state consists in another kind of life, essentially different from this which nature hath given to us. It will be a spiritual life. And, the

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resurrection,

^m 1 Cor. ii. 9.

At fubitæ horrifico lapsu de montibus adiunt
Harpyiæ, et magnis quatunt clangoribus alas :
 Diripiuntque dapes, contactuque omnia foedant
Immundo.

Sociis tunc arma capeant
 Edico, et dirâ bellum cum gente gerendum.
 Haud secus ac jussi faciunt, tectosque per herbam
 Disponunt enses, et scuta latentia condunt.
 Ergo, ubi delapsæ sonitum per curva dedere
 Littora ; dat signum speculâ Misenus ab altâ
Ære cavo : invadunt socii, et nova prælia tentant,
Obscuras pelagi ferro fædere volucres.
Sed neque vim plumis ullam, nec vulnera tergo
Accipiunt : celerique fugâ sub fidera lapsæ
Semesam prædam et vespigia fæda relinquunt.

VIRGIL.

116 *Prejudices which hinder the right* CHAP. IX.

resurrection, which Christians look for, will be a resurrection to that spiritual life^o which hath its beginning in grace, and not in nature; and which was produced in them here, by means of the divine Revelation, and by the power and operation of the divine Spirit. The Church is wholly a new creation: and, *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*. Therefore all and every one of the objections of infidels, resulting as they do from ignorance, mistakes, and blunders, must fall to the ground. *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit.*

^o Matthew xxii. 29, 30.

Luke xx. 34, 35, 36.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER X.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

IT was an affectation of wisdom in the pursuit of speculative, or philosophical, science, which, in all ages of the world, produced the corruption of revealed religion. By introducing the philosophy of *Plato* into the Church, the true interpretation of the Scriptures, the spiritual sense of the Law and the Prophets, was perverted, obscured, overwhelmed, and at length brought into discredit. To correct the fault of this Platonic mysticism, and to moderate the disputes which were the consequence of it, *Aristotle* was seated in the divinity chair^p. They who followed his method of philosophizing, admitted into the Church the light of nature, the law of nature, and natural religion, and interpreted the sacred Scriptures by these principles; that is, they made the revelation of God bend to the probable conjectures of reason.

^p The basis of *Plato's* philosophy was *tradition*, which he derived from the school of Pythagoras, and from the sages with whom he conversed in his travels into Egypt. *Plato* followed the symbolic mode of philosophizing, which *Aristotle* rejected, together with the authority of tradition. The basis of *Aristotle's* philosophy was *nature*; its form, *dialectic*.

This method of interpreting the Scriptures, was ardently pursued by the *Schoolmen* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries^q; and, this method was not relinquished by Protestant Divines at the Reformation.

^q “ Hæc scientia (nempe theologia) accipere potest aliquid à philosophicis disciplinis, non quod ex necessitate eis indigeat, sed ad majorem manifestationem eorum, quæ in hæc scientiæ traduntur. Quod utitur eis, non est, propter defectum vel insufficientiam ejus, sed propter defectum intellectus nostri; qui ex his, quæ per naturalem rationem cognoscuntur, faciliter manu ducitur in ea, quæ sunt supra rationem, quæ in hæc scientiæ traduntur.—Naturalis ratio subservit fidei.—Deum esse et alia hujusmodi, quæ per rationem naturalem nota possunt esse de Deo, non sunt articuli fidei, sed præambula ad articulos. Sic enim fides præsupponit cognitionem naturalem.—Possimus Deum in hæc vitæ naturali lumine cognoscere.—In hoc perducere possumus, ut cognoscamus de Deo an est, et ut cognoscamus de ipso ea, quæ necesse est ei convenire.—Est in hominibus lex quedam naturalis secundum quam bonum et malum discernunt.—Impræfatio divini luminis in nobis.—Omnes rationis participes aliquam notitiam legis æternæ habere carentur.—Lex naturæ quo ad prima principia omnibus communia, et secundum notitiam.—Lex vetus manifestabat præcepta legis naturæ; igitur ad illa, quæ lex vetus continebat de lege naturæ, omnes tenebantur ad observantiam veteris legis: non quia erant de veteri lege, sed quia erant de lege naturæ.—Præcepta moralia, cum de his sunt quæ, quatenus ad bonos mores pertinent, humanæ rationi convenient, cuius judicium a ratione naturali aliquo modo derivatur; necesse est illa omnia ad legem naturæ aliquo modo pertinere.—Illa præcepta ad Decalogum pertinent, quorum notitiam homo habet per seipsum à Deo: hujusmodi vero sunt illa, quæ statim ex principiis communibus primis cognosci possunt modicâ consideratione.—Cum homo naturaliter est rationalis et intellectualis naturæ, eum quoque naturales veritates absque supernaturali dono gratiæ cognoscere posse constat.”

THOM. AQUINATIS Summa.

This language was never held, nor these opinions expressed, till Christians dabbled in the Aristotelian philosophy. *Falsum* intelligere, est quidem sapientiæ, sed humanae. *Ultra bunc gradum* procedi ab homine *NON POTEST*: itaque multi philosophorum religiones sustulerunt. *Verum autem scire*, divinæ est sapientiæ. Homo autem per seipsum pervenire ad hanc scientiam *NON POTEST*, nisi docetur a Deo. Nota Ciceronis vox est; Utinam tam facile vera invenire possem, quam *falsa* convincere. Quod, quia vires humanæ conditionis *excedit*, ejus officii facultas nobis est attributa, quibus tradidit Deus scientiam veritatis.

LACTANTIUS.

formation'. *Mosheim* informs us, that "the Doc-
tors of the *Helvetic* Church were soon per-
suaded of the importance of philosophical know-
ledge; and hence it was, that in 1588, when an
academy was founded in *Geneva*, by *Calvin*,
his first care was to place in this new seminary
a professor of philosophy. But, (saith the his-
torian,) this professor had a limited province
assigned him, being obliged to confine his in-

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" instructions

* Primus liber Institutionis Christianæ Religionis, Johanne Calvino authore, est De Cognitione Dei, quatenus est Creator, Conservator, et Gubernator rerum omnium et singularium. Docet et quæ sit vera Creatoris notitia, et in quem finem tendat, cap. i. & ii: Hanc non in scholâ disci, sed quemlibet ab utero esse sibi ejus magistrum. " Se nemo aspicere potest quin ad Dei, in quo vivit et movetur, intuitum sensus suos protinus convertat.—Unusquisque sui agnitione non tantum infigatur ad querendum Deum, sed etiam ad reperiendum quasi manu ducitur."

" Dei notitiam hominum mentibus naturaliter effe inditam —Quendam ineffe humanæ menti, et quidem naturali instinctu, divinitatis sensum, extra controversiam ponimus: Si quidem, nequis ad ignorantiae praetextum confugeret, quandam sui numinis intelligentiam universis Deus ipse indidit, cuius memoriam assidue revocans, novas subindæ guttas instillat: ut quum ad unum omnes intelligent Deum esse, et suum esse opificem, suo ipsorum testimonio damnentur quod non et illum coluerint, &c.—Impii quoque ipsi exemplo sunt, vigere semper in omnium hominum animis aliquam

Dei notionem.—*Omnibus inditum esse divinitus religionis semen experientia testatur*—Quia ultimus beatæ vitæ finis in Dei cognitione positus est; ne cui præclusus esset ad felicitatem aditus, non solùm bonum mentibus indidit illud quod diximus religionis semen, sed ita se patefecit in toto mundi opificio, ac se quotidie palam offert, ut aperire oculos nequeant quin aspicere eum cogantur.—Singulis operibus suis certas gloriae suæ notas insculpsit, et quidem adeò claras et insignes ut sublata sit quamlibet radibus et stupidis ignorantia excusat. —Sed quum ne plebeii quidem et rudissimi, qui solo oculorum adminiculo instruti sunt, ignorare queant divinæ artis excellentiam, ultrò se in ista innumerabili, et tamen adeo distincta et disposita cœlestis militiæ varietate exerentem; constat neminem esse cui non abundè sapientiam suam Dominus patescat.—Impiorum quoque animi solo terræ cœlique aspectu ad creatorem surgere coguntur."

" Porrò hæc ipsa quæ ex duabus tabulis dicenda sunt, quodammodo nobis dictat lex illa interior, quam omnium cordibus inscriptam et quasi impressam superius dictum est."

“ structions to a mere interpretation of the pre-
 “ cepts of *Aristotle*, who at this time was the
 “ oracle of all the public schools, and whose phi-
 “ losophical principles and method were exclusively
 “ adopted by all the other reformed academies.”

It is possible, that the principles of the Aristotelic philosophy should continue long after the writings of Aristotle, and of his commentators, cease to be studied and read; and, after the subtleties, the sophistry, the barbarous language, and jargon of the schools have been exploded. It is possible, that Christian Divines may still be guilty of confounding philosophy with theology; and, that Protestant Divines may still follow the method of the Schoolmen, by interpreting the sacred Scriptures agreeably to the principles and rules of the Aristotelic philosophy, without knowing that they do so. This may have happened; and, perhaps, it will appear that it hath actually happened, if we compare the writings of our most eminent Divines with those of *Thomas Aquinas* and *John Calvin*.

A passage

* The Reader will here find examples which he may compare with the quotations in the preceding notes.

“ The Law of Nature is an infallible knowledge imprinted in the minds of all the children of men. That which all men have at all times learned, *Nature herself* must needs have taught. St Paul says concerning the Heathen, that *they are a law unto themselves*: his meaning is, that by the force of the light of reason, wherewith God illuminateth every one which cometh into the

world, men being enabled to know truth from falsehood, and good from evil, do therefore learn in many things what the will of God is; which will, Himself not revealing by any extraordinary means unto them, but they by natural discourse attaining the knowledge thereof, seem the makers of those laws, which indeed are His, and they but only the *finders of them out*; whether they import our duty towards God or towards man; and by degrees of discourse the minds even of mere natural men may attain to know

A passage in *Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History*, will help to give a more perfect explanation of my meaning. Treating of The Doctrine of the Church in the sixth Century, the Author remarks

We

know not only that there is a God, but also what power, force, wisdom, and other properties that God hath, and how all things depend on Him."

HOOKE.

" I call that *Natural Religion* which men *might know*, and should be obliged unto, by the *MERE principles of reason*, improved by consideration and experience, *WITHOUT THE HELP OF REVELATION*. This comprehends under it these three principal things: *Firstly*, A belief and acknowledgment of the divine nature and existence: *Secondly*, Due apprehensions of His excellencies and perfections: *Thirdly*, Suitable affections and demeanour towards Him."

BISHOP WILKINS.

" The idea of God is really *imprinted on the minds of men*, by that God whose idea it is. There is an *indelible idea* of a Deity on the *minds of men*, deeply and *universally planted*; and an *indelible character* of Himself *printed by Himself upon the soul*."

BISHOP STILLINGFLEET.

" Religion is a *property* of our *nature*, and the notion of a Deity *intimate* to our understandings, and *sticks close* to them: And *all religion* is founded in right notions of God and His perfections, in so much that divine Revelation itself does *suppose* these for its foundation; and can signify nothing to us, unless they be *first known* and believed: So that the *principles of Na-*

tural Religion are the foundation of that which is revealed; and such principles are those apprehensions which men *naturally have* of the Divine Being and perfections, and the clear notions of good and evil which are *imprinted upon our natures*."

" There is a *natural knowledge* of God, and of the duty we owe to Him, which the Apostle calls *That of God*, which is *obvious to be known by the light of nature*, and is *as much as is absolutely necessary for us to know*. The creation of the world is a plain demonstration to man of the being and power of God; and if so, then God is *naturally known* to men; and such *natural knowledge* of Him to be a Being of all perfections, *is the surest and safest hold* that religion hath on *human nature*."

" Natural Religion is *obedience* to the *natural Law*, and the performance of such duties as *natural Light*, *without any express* and *supernatural revelation*, doth dictate to men. These lie at the bottom of all religion, and are the great fundamental duties which God requires of all mankind. These are the *surest and most sacred* of all other Laws; those which God hath riveted in our souls, and written upon our hearts; and these are what we call moral duties, and most valued by God, which are of eternal and perpetual obligation, because they

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“ We may perceive, in the writers of this age, some evident marks of the three different methods of explaining and inculcating the doctrines of religion *which are yet practised* among the Greeks and Latins,” that is, in the Eastern and Western Churches, comprehending the Protestant Churches with all their subdivisions. One of these methods he describes in the following words: “ Others endeavoured to explain the various doctrines of Christianity, by *reasoning* upon their *nature*, their *excellence*, and *fitness*; and thus it was, even with the weapons of *reason* and *argument*, that the most of the Christian Doctors disputed against the Nestorians, the Eutichians, and the Pelagians.” Their method was evidently the same as that of Aristotle, who rejected the authority of tradition and the symbolic mode of philosophizing, and built his system upon the phænomena of nature, the reason and fitness of things. And they who allow the existence of what is called The Light of Nature, The Law of Nature, or the Moral Law, a natural knowledge of God obvious to all mankind, and the

do naturally oblige without any particular and express revelation from God; and these are the foundation of revealed and instituted religion, and all revealed religion does suppose them, and build upon them.”—

—“ The frame and nature of man’s mind and understanding hath the notion of a Deity stamped upon it, or, which is all one, hath such an understanding, as will in its own free use find out a God: So God’s revealing or declaring such

a thing to us, is no necessary argument that it is so, unless, antecedently to this revelation, we be possessed firmly with this principle, that *whatever God says is true*; and *whatever is known antecedently to Revelation, must be known by natural light, and by reasonings and deductions from natural principles*. These natural notions of God are the only standard and measure to judge of divine revelations, and of the difference of moral good and evil.”

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON.

the existence of Natural Religion, do and must follow the method of *Aristotle*, whether they be conscious of it, or not ; and, if they believe the Scriptures contain a revelation from God, they do and must interpret them by the principles which they have adopted, and accommodate the meaning of Revelation to the philosophy of nature ; that is, they must “ explain the various doctrines of Christianity by *reasoning* upon their *nature*, their “ *excellence*, and *fitness*;” and, whatever they judge to be the dictates of nature, or of natural reason, to this standard they must conform their interpretation of the Scriptures. Philosophical Deism is their foundation ; and, *a sort* of Christianity, the feeble superstructure.

Archbishop *Tillotson* asserted, that the Law of Nature, and Natural Religion, are the very ground-work which Revelation supposes, and upon which it is built ; and, that Revelation can signify nothing to us unless right notions of God and His perfections be *first* known and believed. And Bishop *Stillingfleet*, in his contention with *Mr. Locke* about the immortality of the soul, affirmed, that “ in matters of revelation, there must be “ some antecedent principles supposed, *before we* “ *can believe any thing on the account of it!*.” *Mr. Locke* replied, “ Your accusation of my *lessening the credibility* of these articles of faith, is “ founded

t “ Nous ne sommes point du bien commode et d'un grand usage sentiment de Mr. Descartes, qui dans la Morale et dans la Theologie ; mais à quoy fert il qu'il a creu que tous les hommes en venant au monde, avoient une idée de Dieu naturellement imprimée dans leur esprit. Ce sentiment à la vérité nous paroitroit nous paroisse commode, si nous ne pouvons nous persuader qu'il soit véritable ?

ABBADIE.

“ founded on this: That the article of the immortality of the soul abates of its credibility, if it be allowed, That its immateriality (which is the supposed proof from reason and philosophy of its immortality) cannot be demonstrated from natural reason: Which argument of your Lordship's bottoms, as I humbly conceive, on this: That divine Revelation abates of its credibility in all those articles it proposes, proportionably as human reason fails to support the testimony of God. And all that your Lordship, in those passages, has said, when examined, will, I suppose, be found to import thus much,

“ *viz.*

“ Cum anima humana sit forma per se subsistens, expers omnis contrarietatis, non est corruptibilis per se, nec per accidens.—Impossibile est quod forma subsistens definat esse.—In anima intellectiva non potest esse aliqua contrarietas: Recipit enim secundum modum sui esse. Impossibile est quod anima intellectiva sit corruptibilis. Potest intelligere omnia immaterialia et universalia.”

THOMÆ AQUI. Summa.

“ Hominem constare animam et corpore, extra controversiam esse debet: atqui animæ nomine efficiam immortalem, creatam tamen, intelligo.—Quum tot præclaræ dotes quibus humana mens pollet, divinum aliquid insculptum ei claiment, totidem sunt *immortalis efficiæ* testimonia.”

CALVIN.

“ The excellency and immortality of the soul will most evidently appear, by considering the capacities of it, arising from its

own nature: and, from the frame and nature of the human soul, it is *must certain*, that it *must be a simple, uncompounded, indivisible substance*. All *matter* is evidently *composition*, or heap of substances; and by consequence, is necessarily liable to dissolution and corruption. For the particles whereof it consists, are always subject to disunion and separation; and hence it is, that every system of matter, sooner or later, moulders away. But that the soul is not thus compounded, is manifest from all its perceptions and operations; from whence it clearly follows, that it is and *must be incorruptible*.”

BALGUY.

Is this Christianity? If this philosophy be truth, eternal life is not the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, or only *quodam sensu*; but, in reality, was the gift of God in the creation, in the frame and constitution of our nature!!

" *viz.* Does God propose any thing to mankind
 " to be believed? It is very fit and credible to be
 " believed, if reason can demonstrate it to be true.
 " But if *Human Reason* come short in the case,
 " and cannot make it out, its *credibility* is there-
 " by *lessened*; which is in effect to say, That the
 " Veracity of God is not a firm and sure foun-
 " dation of faith to rely upon, without the con-
 " current testimony of reason; that is, with reve-
 " rence be it spoken, God is not to be believed
 " on His own words, unless what He reveals be in
 " itself credible, and *might be believed without*
 " *Him.*" And, to suppose God has revealed what
might be believed without Revelation, is absurd,
 irreligious, and profane.

A revelation from God must be perfect in it-self. It is a supernatural means of information; and, the subjects of Revelation being supernatural also, they can receive no advantage, no additional splendor, from the light of nature. *Whatsoever doth make manifest is light*^w. But, it would be most absurd to give the name of *light* to that which cannot manifest a single object. And, as the light of nature never did, nor can, manifest the things of the Spirit of God, for they are spiritually discerned^x, therefore the light of nature is not *light*, in relation to the things of the Spirit, but utter darkness. And, to say that Revelation wants another revelation, or an immediate revelation to every man's mind, to make it intelligible; or wants the aid of philosophy, or the principles of any kind of philosophy, to explain its meaning; is little less than saying, It is no revelation at all.

To

^w Ephesians v. 13.

^x 1 Cor. ii. 14.

To reveal is to shew, declare, disclose, to lay open, to make known what before was unknown; and, that which is not sufficiently clear to express the mind and will of God intelligibly to my understanding, is no revelation to me. I must understand the meaning of a proposition, before I can assent to that meaning, or to the proposition as expressing that meaning. But, when the meaning is clear and obvious, as it must be in a revelation from God, we are not to "consult reason, and " examine whether the proposition revealed from " God can be made out by natural principles; " and, if it cannot, then reject it," *so said Mr. Locke*, or set it aside, or explain away its meaning, as incongruous with the suggestions of our own minds, and with prejudicate opinions grounded on our very scanty and imperfect knowledge of nature, our very scanty and imperfect knowledge of the relations and reasons of things. And, if the probable conjectures of reason, in any case, contradict the Revelation of God, they must yield to the authority of Revelation; for, we ought to conclude that this contradiction is the fault of our own ignorance, or is produced by some mistake in our method of reasoning. Whatever God hath said, or revealed, is certainly true: There can be no appeal to higher authority; and there ought to be none to one that is inferior^y.

The

^y " Accuratè hic est distingue-
dum, inter sensum, qui Scriptura sa-
cra in se inest, et sensum, qui ei inesse
ab aliquo, seu doctore, seu interprete,
dicitur: Posterior hic sensus, vel
convenit cum Scripturā sacrā, et
est verus, vel non, et est falsus:

Sensus autem, qui ipsi sacræ
Scripturæ inest, nihil est aliud
quam ipsa sacra Scriptura; quæ,
cum sit Verbum ipsum Dei, in se
est αξιοπιστός καὶ αὐτοπιστός, nec
opus habet ullâ probatione, utpote
irrefragabilem habens in se: ex

The Scriptures give a plain account of the origin of all the religions in the world ; and, consequently, of all the ideas, *common notions*², and apprehensions of a Deity, of gods and goddesses, and demons, or of all the religious and moral opinions and sentiments of mankind ; that they were all derived from an original revelation, which men corrupted, and from which they apostatized, yet still retaining the names of things, and imperfect ideas of the primitive truth. But, when philosophy, without knowledge of the Scriptures, or in contempt or neglect of the history of mankind in the Bible, attempted to account for the general belief of divine powers, for the general observation of religious rites, and for the common notions of moral duties obliging the conscience, it invented the hypothesis of *innate* ideas, or characters of the Deity *impressed* upon the human nature, producing apprehensions of a God, a consciousness of right and

ex sece authoritatem. Sensus, qui S. Scripturæ ab interprete aliquo adscribitur, si cum eâ conveniat, ejusdem est veritatis atque authoritatis, cum illo, qui ei per se inest, nec eget adminiculo rationis aut ratiocinii, ut multis probetur homini, nec prejudiciis nec affectibus, laboranti : At verò cæcitas, malitia, pervicacia, multorum, qui ignorant, dubitant, negant, hunc aut illum sensum S. Scripturæ tributum, esse verum ac genuinum ejus sensum, aut eundem cum eo, qui ei per se inest, facit, ut per accidens, respectu talium hominum, locus de-

tur hic aliquis rationi humanæ seu ratiocinio, quo probetur, sensum S. Scripturæ aliam planè convenire cum eo qui ei per se inest, quæ probatio instituenda est ex ipsi sacrâ Scripturâ sed per rationem ac ratiocinium, cuius hic tum clarissimè conspicitur usus, ut et Logicæ totius, in S. S. locis inter se conferendis, in syllogismis conficiendis, in veritate afferendâ, in falsitate interpretationis et ratiocinationis contrariæ refutandâ et expugnandâ.

ADRIANI HEEREBOORD
MELETEMATA.

and wrong, a natural law and natural religion. But, when Christian Divines adopted this hypothesis, they put a veil upon their own hearts, obscured the Scriptures, and distorted the doctrines of Christianity. They ought to have known, that what are called natural apprehensions of the being and perfections of God, and natural religion, are nothing more than opinions transmitted from generation to generation, impressions stamped upon us by education, customs and habits, and which cannot be founded in nature, in the reason and fitness of things, “cùm tam variae fint tamque inter se dissidentes.”

It cannot be supposed, that they, who adopted the principles and method of the Aristotelic philosophy, intended to lessen the credibility of Revelation, or to corrupt its doctrines. By recurring to nature and asserting a natural knowledge of God, and by shewing the agreement of Revelation with the supposed light and law and religion of nature, or with what are called *Men's natural apprehensions of the Deity, and the principles of natural religion*, which were assumed as indubitable principles, they thought to vindicate the credibility and truth of Revelation ; and, by applying the principles of this philosophy to the Scriptures, they hoped to explain them in a more rational manner, and to correct the errors of ignorance and enthusiasm. But, when once Revelation is removed from its own proper foundation, and is interpreted by principles not its own, and which have no relation to the great objects of Revelation, Revelation will become an uncertain tradition, even to those who have the Bible in their hands :

The

The Scriptures will not speak their own meaning, but what the interpreters think they *should* speak; who will be confident that *their* interpretation is the word of God, because it is the fair result of an application of their undoubted principles. And because Philosophy was never yet reduced to any certain standard, and admits a variety of opinions, as various as the degrees and shades of light and colours, therefore, the Platonic philosophy first of all, and the Aristotelic afterwards, has served the purposes of opposing sects, whose religious systems were as inconsistent with each other as light and darkness. Trinitarians, Arians, Socinians, Papists, and Protestants, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians, Mystics, and self-sufficient Moralists, speculative and practical Antinomians, have waged offensive and defensive war with weapons forged upon the anvil of the Stagirite^a; and each in their turns have stared at the rest, with utter astonishment, as blind or obstinately perverse, because they could not see, or would not allow, *their* orthodoxy,

I

^a "Indeed the knowledge of *this* philosophy was necessary for the Greeks; since it was from the depths of this peripatetical wisdom, that the Monophysites and Nestorians drew the subtleties with which they endeavoured to overwhelm the abettors of the Ephesian and Chalcedonian councils.

"The Nestorians and Monophysites, who lived in the East, turned equally their eyes towards Aristotle, and in order to train

their respective followers to the field of controversy, and arm themselves with the subtleties of a contentious logic, translated the principal books of that deep philosopher into their native languages."

MOSHEIM.

And truly, Greeks, Arabians, Persians, Latins, Athanasians, Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites, Eutichians, Papists, and Protestants, have mixed their wine with this water.

thodoxy, their own darling opinions, to be the very Word of God.

In the sixteenth century, many learned divines and many states in Europe, renounced the authority of tradition, of general councils, and of the Pope. They claimed the free use of the Scriptures: they asserted the liberty of free inquiry into the meaning of them, and the right of private judgment. This produced a very important change in the political state of Europe, and a very important reformation of the then existing religion, *i. e.* a reformation of Popery. But, we may judge by future, permanent consequences, whether it was a reformation of Christianity; whether it has restored the spirit and discipline of the primitive Church; or, whether in receding from the excesses of ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition, we have not revolted to the opposite extreme. Observe the state of religion in Catholic and Protestant countries—Heresies and schisms! Divisions and subdivisions without end, and this evil increasing more and more every day! Latitudinarianism under the mask of candour and charity! Stupid insensibility! A form of godliness without the power! Hypocrisy! Profane licentiousness! Atheism! A Babel! A confusion of tongues! Noise and strife! A spirit of infubordination! And at last, A great earthquake, which has convulsed the kingdoms of Europe, and even now threatens the total dissolution of all order, civil as well as religious! But, if the Reformation had been a reformation of Christianity, and had restored the spirit and discipline of the primitive Church, Europe would exhibit, not the wild uproar of hell, but lively patterns

patterns of the heavenly state—harmony, peace, and love.

The heresies and schisms, and other evils, which abound in Protestant countries, are not the fault of the ignorant multitude, but of the learned as well as of the unlearned^b. They cannot be imputed to the Scriptures, or to any defect, or obscurity, in the Revelation of God. The Scriptures were designed for the correction of error ; and, if they contain a revelation from God, they cannot be the cause of it. Nor can the heresies and schisms, and other evils before mentioned, be imputed to the weakness and natural depravity of human nature ; for, this would be imputing the fault to the Scriptures themselves, as not fitted to the condition of mankind. There must, therefore, be some capital mistake, or error, in the method of reading and studying the Scriptures, which has produced all the mischief. What that fault is, I have endeavoured to disclose. If my Reader think I have not succeeded, he must acknowledge this at least, that the free use of the Scriptures has not made either the learned or the unlearned to be of one mind and heart. And yet, if the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, and were designed for general use, there must be a *right* method of reading and studying them, which could not fail to accomplish the purpose of the divine mercy, to harmonize and reform the Church.

^b “ Res enim nulla est, de quâ tanto opere non solum indocti, sed etiam docti, dissentiant : quorum opiniores, cum tam variae sint tamque inter se dissentientes ; al-

terum profecto fieri potest, ut eam nulla, alterum certè non potest, ut plus unâ vera sit.

I wish to be understood ; and therefore remark, that the errors and infinite contradictions, which disgrace the profession of Christianity, have not been imputed in this chapter, to philosophy ; for, neither the Platonic, nor the Aristotelic, nor any other philosophy of the ancients, could have produced those errors which have led us to the brink of a most tremendous precipice. But, the abuse of philosophy, and the application of philosophical opinions to interpret the Scriptures, making the revelation of God bend to the probable conjectures of reason. This is it, which has rendered the Scriptures obscure, and produced so great a strife of tongues, that a stranger, ignorant of the real cause of this evil, might be tempted to conclude the meaning of Revelation to be more equivocal than the Pythian oracles. If the fault lay against any one party, or against any one sect of Christians, I would not have noticed it. But, I know not any sect of Protestants, in whose system there is not sufficient evidence, that they have interpreted the Scriptures by the same principles which were adopted by the Scholastic Divines, though their interpretations and conclusions are various and inconsistent.

The Scriptures plainly assert, that the Gentiles knew not God^c. They represent all mankind, every one upon whom the direct rays of the light of Revelation do not shine, as walking in darkness and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death^d ; *having the understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them,*

^c 1 Thest. iv. 5. Eph. ii. 12. Gal. iv. 8. ^d Isaiah ix. 2.

them, because of the blindness of their heart^e. These, indeed, are expressions of a very great depravity, and imply an apostacy from some happier condition. But the same Scriptures, which represent the general mass of mankind utterly ignorant of the true God, without any apprehensions of true religion, addicted to the vilest superstitions, and sacrificing to devils, or demons, represent also the wisest of the heathen philosophers in the same state of moral darkness and utterly incapable of delivering themselves from it. The largest part of the world still remains in the same deplorable condition. And they, who are born of believing parents, till they have acquired the knowledge and use of language, which nature does not teach us; and till instructed by means of this acquired artificial language, are, and must remain as destitute of every idea of God and every principle of religion, as the brute beasts. Yet, in spite of all this evidence to the contrary, and in total want of the evidence of a single person that ever thought of God, or knew any thing of Him, without *instruction*, we presume to talk of the light and law and religion of nature!

To countenance this presumption, a few texts, imperfectly translated and drawn away from the meaning of the context, are opposed to the plainest declarations of man's utter ignorance of God and absolute incapacity to enlighten himself^f. And,

^f I particularly refer to Romans i. 20. and Rom. ii. 14, 15. For an explanation of these texts, I refer to *Ellis on the Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason and Na-* ture; and, to a Sermon on Romans ii. 14, 15. by *Charles Willats, M. A. Rector of Plumtree in Nottinghamshire; lately reprinted in a Collection of Tracts entitled The Scholar Armed.*

to countenance the notion of the law of nature, it has been pretended that the municipal Law of the Jews, promulgated from Mount Sinai, was a republication of this same pretended law of nature^g. These principles taken for granted, have served the purpose of rank Antinomianism, and the more rational system of Bishop Wilkins, Archbishop Tillotson, and their followers ; and, to this fatal error, may be ascribed the infinite dissensions of the Protestant Churches, the prodigious increase of Deism, the philosophism, the Atheism, the disorganization and anarchy, which, at this time, are the yellow fever of Europe.

Some of our modern Divines represent Christ as a new law-giver ; as expressing a more perfect revelation of the Divine will ; as establishing a more holy and perfect system of religious truth and moral practice, than is discoverable by, what they call, *The light of nature* ; or, than the revelation by which the Patriarchs and Jews were enlightened. Some go further : and insist that the revelation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is directly opposite to the revelation of God in the Old Testament. I leave my reader to reflect on what has been already said on *The light of nature*. Let him discover, if he can, a single ray of light which is not derived from Revelation. And, if the reader have patience to examine what will be advanced in the following chapters, he may discern

^g If the Decalogue had been the Law of Nature, the principle of this Law would have been the authority of God, as the God of Nature, and the relation of the Jews to God, as their Creator. But, the principle of this Law is quite another thing ; the redemption of Israel from Egypt ; and the blessings promised, and the curses threatened, in this Law, relate to the land of Canaan.

discern that there is not one doctrine of faith, which relates to our common salvation, in the New Testament, which was not known with equal clearness under the Old Testament dispensation. How then is it possible to be true, that Christ is a new legislator^h, or that there is any direct opposition in the tenor of the Old Testament and the New?

Some Divines distinguish the Decalogue from other parts of the law of Moses; from the enlargement, and explanation; from the particular cases defined and decided by the legislator; and from the prescribed forms of homage and worship; all which are virtually comprehended in the ten precepts. They consider the Decalogue as a law by itself, perfectly distinct from these several parts, and call it *The Moral Law*; and, they speak of these several parts, as two distinct laws, which they call *The Ceremonial Law*, and *The Judicial Law*. *The moral law*, say they, is the original law written in the nature of Adam; of which some broken parts remained after his fall, and still remain in the hearts of all his childrenⁱ.

I 4

They

^h James iv. 11, 12. Eph. iv. 5, 6.

ⁱ “The law of nature is the rule of good and evil, inscribed by God on man’s conscience, even at his creation, and therefore binding upon him by divine authority. That such a law was connate with, and as it were, implanted in man, appears from the reliques, which, like the ruins of some noble building, are still extant in every man; namely, from those common notions, by which the

Heathens themselves distinguished right from wrong, and by which they were a law to themselves.”

“It is, moreover, to be observed, that this law of nature is the same in substance with the Decalogue. Those precepts are undoubtedly the law proposed to Adam, upon which the Covenant of Works was built.”

“In the Scripture, we find two Covenants with God and Man:

The

They suppose this moral law, promulgated from Mount Sinai, and engraven upon tables of stone, was a new edition of that original law, or was a republication of the same law which Deists and deistical Divines mean by *The law of nature*.

This opinion is entertained by two very different parties; and, variously modified, by the intermediate sects. Upon this opinion, one party ground *their* doctrine of the imputation of Christ's obedience. For, if the law promulgated from Sinai be the municipal law of the Jews, and not the original

The Covenant of Works; otherwise called *The Covenant of Nature*, or *the Legal*; and *The Covenant of Grace*."

" We begin with the consideration of *The Covenant of Works*, otherwise called, *of the Law*, and *of Nature*; because prescribed by *the Law*, requiring *Works* as the condition, and founded upon, and coeval with, *Nature*. This Covenant is an agreement between God and Adam, formed after the image of God, as the head and root, or representative of the whole human race; by which God promised eternal life and happiness to him, if he yielded obedience to all His commands; threatening him with death if he failed but in the least point; and Adam accepted this condition."

WITSIUS.

But, Gen. ii. 16, 17. and chap. iii. 17. describe a very different Covenant, or Law. So far from being a Covenant of *Works*, the condition consisted in *not* working, or *not* doing the thing forbidden. And not a word is said of *eternal life*, or *eternal death*, as the curse

of Adam's transgression. The forfeiture of natural life is confessed on all sides to be the condemnation which is come upon all men through the offence of Adam. This sentence is irreversible. It is appointed unto all men once to die; and, die we must. Christ hath not reversed the sentence, nor privileged any one with exemption from the bands of death: Nor will he restore us again to the paradisaical life, which Adam forfeited and lost; nor to this worthless life of nature. And, if *eternal death* were part of the sentence pronounced against Adam and his posterity, it seems necessary that it should be inflicted. The Word of God cannot fail till it hath obtained its full effect. And, why one part of the sentence of condemnation should be irreversible, and infallibly come upon all men, and not the other, cannot be conceived. And, if both parts were to be inflicted, What place could be found for a Redeemer?

original law which Adam transgressed, or if it be not the law of nature, or what is meant by *The law of nature*, it would be in vain to pretend that Christ, as our proxy, or representative, obeyed this law for us Gentiles who were never under it. But, on the other hand, it is worthy of consideration, whether a moral law, or the law of nature, supposing such a law, can admit a substitute; for, according to every definition of this law, *jus suum cuique tribuit*; and it will no more allow of one person obeying or suffering punishment for another, than nature, or the law of our being, will allow one man to eat and drink and sleep for another, or to be starved to death merely because another man will not, or cannot, work for his bread. It requires every one to obey, or suffer in his own person: therefore the substitution of one for another, would be a violation of this law, as much as the perpetration of the most flagitious wickedness. This is the stumbling-block of Deists and Socinians, and of many others: But, it is a stumbling-block of man's own making^k.

It

^k The principal use of this Law, they say, is for the conviction of sinners; to shew men their sinfulness under the natural government of God, as having transgressed the law of nature, and violated the obligations of their relation to God as their Creator. They seem to think it necessary to make men Deists, and penitent Deists, first of all, before they are fit to become Christians. Thus Calvin laid the foundation of his system in *Deism*, mixing with

it a portion of the comfortable doctrine of the *Stoics*, and a moderate degree of theological mysticism. With these ingredients, he incorporated the doctrines of Revelation, in his book of *Institutes*.—Yet, I admire his learning, his intrepidity, his resolution, his perseverance, his indefatigable labours. His book of Institutes has been a storehouse out of which inferior geniuses have enriched their compilations: many have imitated; but,

It is, indeed, expressly said, Rom. v. 19. that by the obedience of Christ, the many who believe in Him are made righteous; and, in Phil. ii. 8. that He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. And, undoubtedly, upon this obedience of Christ, our whole salvation depends, or results from it. But, what was that obedience? or, to what law? Certainly, not to the ceremonial law: and, for the reason before expressed, not to the moral law. Man fell, not by breaking either of these; and, he is not redeemed by obedience to them. Man fell by breaking a positive law, imposed by the sovereign authority of Jehovah; and, he is redeemed by obedience to another constitution derived from the same authority. I will preach the law, the special ordinance or appointment of Jehovah, His decree, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, &c. Ps. xi. 7. This refers to the resurrection of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And, the resurrection of Christ, implies His sufferings, His obedience unto death; which, therefore, is part of the same law, or decree; according to which it is said, He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, namely, to suffer. This law, or decree, is the law of redemption, according to which, it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the captain of salvation perfect, a fit and complete deliverer, through sufferings.

God required a sacrifice, and such a sacrifice as would answer to all the ends proposed by the institution

as a body of scholastic divinity, equal. His faults were the faults the book of Institutes has not been of the time in which he lived. excelled, nor hath it found its His virtues were his own.

stitution of sacrifices: And, because the sacrifices of the law of Moses were not such, therefore he delighted not in the blood of bullocks, lambs, and he-goats. Wherefore, when the Redeemer of men, appointed in the eternal counsel of Jehovah, cometh into the world, He saith *Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings,* and other sacrifices *for sin,* appointed in the typical law, *Thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein:* Then said He, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* But what *will?* not surely to obey a moral law for us; but, to accomplish that merciful will of God, which required that man should be redeemed by an adequate and perfect sacrifice. *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God: yea, thy law, all that is written in the volume of the book, upon this subject, concerning me, is within my heart:* I know the terms; I see the bitter cup which I must drink; I know the measure of sufferings appointed for the Redeemer of men; but, I draw not back; my affections are engaged; my soul submits; I obey: I view the great design, the glory of God in the eternal salvation of a multitude innumerable; and, for the joy set before me, I will endure the cross, and despise the shame of the most ignominious sufferings. Wherefore, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. By this obedience, the many are made righteous, pardoned, justified by His blood, and made heirs of the hope of eternal life. We preach Christ crucified, said St. Paul: and again, I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified: and, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; and
God

God hath set Him forth a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins, that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Who, that is not blinded by prejudice; who, that knows the Scriptures, does not see all the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments harmonizing in this point, God and man reconciled, heaven and earth united¹!

I am

¹ It will not be lost labour, if my reader will take his Bible and turn to the following texts: Rom. iv. 25. Matth. xx. 28. chap. xxvi. 28. and Luke xxii. 20. John i. 29. Acts xx. 28. Rom. iii. 24. 25. chap. v. 9. 10. chap. viii. 3. Gal. iii. 13. Tit. ii. 14. Heb. ii. 14. 15. chap. ix. 12. 14. 22. 26. chap. x. 10. 14. 19. 1 Pet. i. 19. chap. ii. 24. chap. iii. 18. 1 John i. 7. chap. ii. 2.

For the learned reader, if a learned reader ever honour this chapter with his notice, I transcribe a passage from PISCATOR.

"Contra hanc doctrinam objicitur illud Rom. v. 19. *Sicut per inobedientiam unius hominis* (videlicet Adami) *peccatores constituti sunt multi: ita per obedientiam unius* (videlicet Christi) *justi consituentur multi:* quasi nimirum Apostolus obedientiae vocabulo illuc comprehendat sanctam Christi vitam. At, si sic intelligeret, ipse sibi adverfaretur. Quare dictum hoc exponendum est ita ut cum reliquis ejusdem Apostoli dictis et perpetuâ ipsius doctrinâ consentiat: videlicet ut dicamus eum intelligere obedientiam illam quâ Patri obe-

divit patiendo pro nobis cruciatus infernales. Objicitur etiam dictum illud Christi Johan. xvii. 19. *Ego pro eis me sanctifico;* quasi illuc loquatur de sanctâ suâ vitâ. Sed planum est ex toto illo sermone et ex ipsâ temporis circumstantiâ, Christum illuc loqui de sanctificatione sui in victimam expiatoriam pro omnibus ipso à Patre datis, hoc est Electis. Præterea objicitur illud Pauli Rom. v. 10. *Si quum inimici effemus reconciliati fuimus Deo per mortem filii ejus;* multo magis reconciliati, servabimur per vitam ipsius. Quasi scilicet Paulus illuc salutem nostram adscribat sanctæ Christi vitæ. At planum est, Apostolum loqui de vitâ Christi gloriósâ ad quam resurrexit ex morte: neque aliud velle, quam Christum salutem nobis morte suâ partam, virtute seu potentia suâ in æternum tueri. Porro hoc loco illud quoque observandum: sicut per obedientiam Christi patientis pro nobis, pars nobis est remissio peccatorum et liberatio a morte æternâ (sicut dicta paulò-antè commemorata abunde testantur) ita etiam per eandem obedientiam partam nobis

I am ashamed to mention the absurd opinion, that Christ fulfilled, *i. e.* obeyed, the *ceremonial* law for us Gentiles; who were never under this law, nor never under obligation to obey it in our own persons. And, it cannot be true that the obedience of Christ hath fulfilled this law, because it is not yet fulfilled, in the sense they mean by His fulfilling it. But, Christ is even now fulfilling it, so far as relates to the sacerdotal office, by His appearing in the presence of God for us. And,

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bis esse vitam æternam. Id quod
tum ex re ipsâ liquet: nam ubi
est remissio peccatorum (sicut Lu-
therus in suâ Catechesi tradit) ibi
etiam est vita ac salus: tum verò
ex ipsis verbis nonnullorum dic-
torum. Ut Galat. iii. 13, 14.
Christus redemit nos ab execra-
tione Legis, dum pro nobis fac-
tus est execratio (Scriptum est
enim, Execrabilis quisquis pendet
in ligno) ut in Gentibus *benedictio*
Abrabe (hoc est, Abrahæ promis-
sa) extet. At illa benedictio com-
prehendit vitam æternam, atque
ad eò de illâ potissimum intelligi-
tur. Heb. ii. 9, 10, *Ut gratiâ Dei*
pro omnibus, *gustaret mortem*. Dice-
bat enim eum propter quem sunt
omnia et per quem sunt omnia,
ut multos filios in gloriam adduc-
turus principem salutis eorum *per*
afflictiones consecraret. Hic ex co-
harentia sententiarum potest col-
ligi, Deum filios suos (id est elec-
tos) in gloriam adducere per mortem
filii unigeniti, quam ille pro ipsis
omnibus gustavit. Item Heb. x.
19. Habemus libertatem ingre-
diendi in *sacrarium*, per sanguinem
Iesu. Ecce jus ingrediendi in fa-

crarium, nempe cœlum, hoc est,
jus vitæ eterna nobis partum, ad-
scribit sanguini Christi. Sic i Pet.
iii. 18. Christus semel pro pec-
catis passus fuit, justus pro injus-
tis: ut nos ad Deum adduceret:
quod quid aliud est, quam ut in-
troduceret nos in cœlum ad fru-
endum vitâ æternâ? Quare non
reclè à nonnullis possesso vitæ
æternæ, tanquam effectum adscri-
betur obedientia Christi quam Pa-
tri præstitit sancti vivendo secun-
dum Legem."

Every Minister of the Church
of England asserts this doctrine
when he gives warning for the
celebration of the holy Commu-
nion. "I propose to administer
the most comfortable Sacra-
ment of the Body and Blood of
Christ; to be received in re-
membrance of His meritorious
Cross and Passion; Whereby alone,
namely by our Saviour's suffer-
ings and death—WHEREBY
ALONE we obtain remission
of our sins, AND are made par-
takers of the kingdom of hea-
ven."

a great part of the Levitical institutions were to be observed by the congregation of Israel; and this part of the service could not be performed by the High Priest for them; nor, can the High Priest over the house of God fulfil, or obey, these institutions, in their typical meaning, for us: They are yet to be obeyed, and must be obeyed, in their typical meaning, by all Christians^m.

The covenant of God with Israel was abrogated, not by Christ's obedience, or by His obeying the law; but, by the disobedience of the Jews, by their absolute apostacy, completed in crucifying the Lord of glory. And, because Christ submitted to this outrage upon his person, it is said He broke down the middle-wall of partition, and abolished *in His flesh* the law of commandments, and nailed it, as a cancelled bond, to His cross. But, the Jews drove the nail. Therefore, *All nations shall say, Wherfore hath the Lord done thus unto this land! What meaneth the heat of this great anger!* Then men shall say, *Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt; and the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.* And, this cause of the abolition of the covenant is assigned in Heb. viii. 9. quoted from Jer. xxxi. 32. *because they continued not in*

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^m The circumcision of the heart is the spiritual meaning of the law of circumcision in the flesh. And, every member of the Christian Church, who is not circumcised in heart, is and will be cut off from the congregation. See Rom. ii. 28, 29. Col. ii. 11, 12, 13. Phil. iii. 3. Mark xvi. 16. Romans ii. 8, 9.

my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. And, this which is here affirmed, hath no particular relation to what is called The ceremonial Law, but is eminently true of the whole law, of what is called The moral law, which was, in the strictest sense, *the covenant which the Lord God of their fathers made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.*

But, this abolition of the law, is of the law in the *letter*, requiring obedience from *Israel*, because the Lord their God brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and in relation to the land of Canaan. But, neither the obedience of Christ, nor the disobedience of the Jews, hath abolished, or changed, the law in its spiritual design. *If we believe not, yet He abideth faithfulⁿ:* and, said St. Paul, God hath made us (the Apostles) able ministers, not of the letter written and engraven in tables of stone, but, of the *spirit*, which he called *The new covenant*, in Christ's blood^o.

When this Apostle said The law is *spiritual*^p, he did not mean a mere moral law, resulting from the natural relation of man to God, as his Creator: He did not mean, that the law is spiritual, because " it is not like human laws, which only " reach to the outward actions, and take no " cognizance of the motives, affections, and " thoughts^q:" He did not mean that the spirituality

^a 2 Tim. ii. 13.

^b 2 Cor. iii. 6.

^c Rom. vii. 14.

^d It is not true that human laws take no cognizance of the motives, affections, and thoughts. In general, the motives, affections

ality of the law consists in the rigour of its demands, and the excess, or extent, of its requirements. A law does not take its denomination, of political, moral, religious, or spiritual, from what it prescribes ; but, from the principle upon which it exacts obedience. And, when St. Paul said, The law is spiritual, he meant, that it was so in relation to Christ, who is the end of the law, and because faith in Him, as the Lord our Redeemer, is the principle of that holy obedience which it requires from the heirs of the *eternal inheritance*.

According to St. Paul, a man is spiritual who rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in any degree of conformity to the law in the *letter*^r; whose hope is in God through Christ, looking for eternal life through the mediator; and who, in loving, serving, and obeying God, does every thing in the name of our Lord Jesus. But, take the most finished human character, ascribe to it the highest wisdom of philosophy, the most perfect moral life proportioned to the severest rules of the best

tions and thoughts, are presumed to be right when the actions are right. But, in many cases, human laws judge actions by their motives. If an ideot or madman kill, it is not murder. If two men strive, and, in a sudden affray, one man strike the other and kill him, it is *manslaughter*, but not murder, because there was no *malice* in the heart, no murderous intention. And no action whatever is treason in the eye of the law, in which there was not a wicked

design, or intention, to compass either the natural or political death of the King. There are moral sentiments, and moral dispositions, as well as moral actions: and a man is not a moral man, but an hypocrite, whose sentiments, dispositions, motives, affections, and thoughts, do not accord with his actions. Therefore, it is absurd to make the *spirituality* of the Law to consist in its requiring such inward qualifications.

^r Phil. iii. 3, 6, 7, 8, 9. Rom. ii. 29.

best moralists; suppose the person, to whom you ascribe this character, to have practised every precept you can find in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles; but, abstract from this character the principle of faith in Christ; and then, according to St. Paul, the man, to whom you impute so much virtue, is not spiritual, but *carnal, sold under sin*, an apostate from the revelation of God. His virtue, call it inward as well as outward obedience to the moral law, is mere morality still: it has no relation to the spiritual and eternal life, and can produce no more than moral advantages, in relation to the present life, his political existence in the present world. His righteousness will die with him.

In order to make a moral law of the Decalogue, they cut off the preface, without which the first commandment is a mutilated, imperfect sentence; for, the pronoun *ME* stands without an antecedent, and the law without a principle. But, if the preface be part of the law, and an essential part too, then this preface is spiritual, if the law be spiritual; and then, it will be impossible to make a *moral* law of it, because a moral law knows nothing of redemption from the land of Egypt. But, in St. Paul's sense of the spirituality of the law, the preface will have a very important meaning, and is even necessary to its being a spiritual law. The redemption of Israel from Egypt, was a type of the Salvation of God's elect, their deliverance from the dominion of Satan: and, as the deliverance of Israel was effected by the great power of God; so this, by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Therefore,

the spiritual sense of this preface, “*I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,*” must be the redemption of the spiritual Israel; and this law, in its spiritual sense, must be the law of faith, by which the whole body of the Christian Church is governed, and according to which every one of its members is and will be rewarded*.

Calvin saw the importance of this preface, and said, “Whether you make this preceding sentence a part of the first commandment, or read it separately, is indifferent to me, if you will not deny that it stands as a preface to the whole law.—Let this remain impressed upon your mind, that the redemption of Israel is mentioned to excite the Jews to obey, with greater alacrity, Him, who could so justly challenge their obedience.

* Behold the days come, saith the *LORD*, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely (shall experience a more glorious salvation than their redemption from Egypt, and enjoy superior privileges to any they ever possessed in the earthly Canaan). And this is His name whereby He shall be called *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. Therefore behold, the days come, saith the *LORD*, that they shall no more say (viz. as the principle of obedience) *The LORD liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt*; but, *the LORD LIVETH which brought up and which led THE SEED OF THE HOUSE OF*

ISRAEL (the spiritual seed, who are born after the Spirit) out of the North country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land (and enjoy that rest of which David prophesied in Ps. xcvi. and which *remaineth* for the people of God). The Gentiles being admitted into the commonwealth of Israel, and fellow-citizens with the saints, and having experienced the same spiritual redemption, therefore the same spiritual law, or new covenant, and the same principle of obedience is theirs also.—I will not insult my reader’s understanding, by supposing he does not know that all the exhortations and commands in the New Testament are urged and enforced upon this principle of our redemption and salvation by Christ.

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“ dience. And, lest we think this argument has
“ no relation to us, we should reflect, that the
“ Egyptian bondage was a type of that spiritual
“ captivity, in which all are detained, until our
“ divine Saviour deliver us by His mighty power,
“ and translate us into that kingdom wherein is
“ perfect freedom. Wherefore, as formerly, when
“ He would reduce the dissipated Israelites into
“ one body, to serve and worship Him, He rescued
“ them from the most grievous tyranny of *Pha-*
“ *raoh*; so, at this time, He delivers those to whom
“ He offers Himself to be their God, from the
“ deadly power of Satan; which deliverance of
“ their souls was faintly shadowed forth by that
“ corporal emancipation. There is no one, there-
“ fore, who hath experienced this deliverance,
“ but should listen with eager attention to the law
“ of that King of Kings, from whom as all things
“ derive their beginning, so should they all de-
“ vote themselves and direct the end of their be-
“ ing to Him.—There is no one, I say, who has
“ learned, that he was peculiarly chosen to obey
“ this divine Legislator, who ought not to be in-
“ flamed with eager desire to acknowledge Him
“ from whose goodness he expects to derive tem-
“ poral blessings and eternal glory; and, by whose
“ wonderful power and mercy, he knows him-
“ self to have been rescued from the most immi-
“ nent danger of final perdition*.”

This apprehension of the typical design of the Decalogue, I doubt not, was one of the means, by which this great and good man was preserved from the consequence to which some of his op-

nions tended ; but, into which, many have been led, who were ignorant of the typical design of this law. Considering it merely as a moral law, or the law of nature, they suppose Christ hath vicariously obeyed it for them ; and, that this law hath no longer any commanding power over them ; that its sanctions are dissolved, and, as a covenant, this law is become obsolete, and entirely abolished ; and, therefore, sin is not sin in them, and cannot hurt or destroy their souls if they commit it ; because, say they, We are perfectly holy and perfectly righteous in Christ, by imputation of his unspotted holiness and perfect obedience to the moral law. To this extreme many have been led, through the fatal admission of the philosophical opinion of the light and law of nature. Many others, who adopt the principle, happily stop short of this precipice — But, the danger is very great !

The other party, in the opposite extreme, make little, or no, account of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity ; and some protest against them. They think it enough if people believe the existence of God ; if they acknowledge Him to be their creator, the supreme Being, the governor of the world ; and if, as good citizens, they practice the duties of morality. The law of Moses, they suppose to be an epitome of the law of nature, accommodated to the peculiar circumstances of the Jews ; and, that Jesus Christ adopted this law, and carried it to a greater extent and perfection than was ever known before, either by the Jews or the Gentiles, adding certain stronger assurances of a future state, in order to excite

excite mankind to a more diligent cultivation of a religious and moral life. But, if the Jews and Gentiles had universally finned, these against the law of nature, and those against the law of Moses, so that the whole world became guilty before God—If neither Jews nor Gentiles did keep, or fulfil, a less perfect law, can it be hoped that men will keep, or fulfil, the more perfect, the more holy, the stricter law, which, they say, Jesus Christ hath revealed in the New Testament.

This objection to their scheme, of lowering Christianity to the standard of Deism and morality, would have been obvious, if they had not been blinded by the perversion of a most precious truth. They say, God is good and merciful, and requires nothing on our part to make Him so; and, that sincerity is all He requires of us^u.—That God is good and merciful is not brought in question^x: that He exacts nothing at our hands, to make Him good and merciful, is true: that the sacrifice of Christ was not designed to make God

* Why then reveal a more perfect law, if sincerity be all in all? or, What advantage to mankind? for, sincerity would be essentially the same virtue under the law of Moses, and the law of nature, and equally meritorious under every dispensation.

^x They talk of *mercy* as “agreeable to our natural notions of the Deity;” they should say, as agreeable to our *prejudices*. Let them first prove that we have any *natural* notions of God at all; and then, let them prove, if they can, that there is any thing in God

which may properly be called *mercy*; or, upon the supposition of sin and guilt in a creature lying under God’s righteous condemnation, that God can be reconciled to that creature, so as to receive that sinner into favour again, and treat him as if he had not finned. Philosophy is silent upon this subject. Natural reason will find it impossible to produce an argument, that will satisfy a guilty conscience, to prove there is any mercy in God, or that a sinner condemned to die shall rise again to eternal life.

any thing He was not before, without that sacrifice, or previous to the offering of that sacrifice, is also true: but, that it was necessary to the glory of God, or to the manifestation of His glorious perfections; and necessary for us, as the world was constituted, and as it now lieth in wickedness, and guilty before God; that God might appear to be that holy and righteous Being which He is, while He forgives penitent sinners; and, as a propitiation for our sins, that it might be a way for us to the Father's mercy and grace, the medium of all divine communications—this is as plain a truth as any that is revealed in the Oracles of God:—that sincerity was the sum total of what God required from man, in his primitive state, and of what He requires from man in his fallen state, under the economy of grace, is certainly true: But, regard must be had to his condition then and now. The sincerity required of sinful man must bear relation to the truth of his present condition, and to the great object of Revelation. It is not the sincerity of an Atheist, the sincerity professed by Mr. Hume, or, of a man that believeth his own lie; It is not the sincerity of a Saducee, nor that of a Pharisee; It is not the sincerity of a Philosopher, or a mere Moralist; not the sincerity of an Heathen, or an Idolater; nor that of an Unitarian, or Socinian; no—nor the sincerity of a mere orthodox Papist, or Protestant—but, the sincerity of an *Israelite indeed*; of one, who truly turns to God; of one, who, in an humble acknowledgement of his guilt (as doomed to death by Adam's transgression, and as worthy to perish for his own personal iniquity) accepts of mercy,

mercy, as mercy indeed, through the mediation, the sufferings, the intercession of our great High Priest; who, in the belief of that mercy, looks with a single eye to eternal life as the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and who, in the hope of that eternal life, walks uprightly in the path of God's commandments.

This is saying no more than, that every true Christian, whatever imperfections he may have to lament and to be humble for before God, is really and truly conformed to the Christian dispensation. This is the true sincerity. It is the obedience of faith; in which, repentance, an acknowledgment of sin and guilt, a spirit of humble dependence upon the Divine mercies, and a due regard to the character of our Saviour, as having made peace by the blood of His cross, are always implied. But, as they, whom I have in view, speak of sincerity, the very truth of the Gospel is kept out of sight, is darkened by vain words, and, so far as they can do it, banished out of the Christian Church.

This dreadful, but specious crisis of error, which makes it seem indifferent, whether a man be a Jew, or a Christian, or a Mahometan, a worshipper of Jupiter, or Jehovah, has been produced by mixing philosophy with Revelation, and, particularly, by introducing into the Church the philosophical opinion of the light and law and religion of nature. And this error has been supported, partly by an affectation of excessive candour; and, in a great measure, by a persuasion, that the New Testament is, by itself, a full and clear revelation of the will of God; and, that the Law of Moses

fes is of little, or no, use to Christians. When the Old Testament is discarded, or read only for the sake of the most remarkable prophecies, there are not any means left, to understand and settle the meaning of the New Testament. They then call into question the propriety of the language, of the words and phrases, of this Testament ; call them bold, eastern figures of speech ; and explain away all the important sense of those passages which relate to the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, by the use of words and phrases in heathen authors, and by analogical criticism.

We will, therefore, consider the unity of design and harmony of doctrine in the Old and New Testaments : and this shall be the subject of our next chapter.

“ In religion,

“ What damned error, but some sober brow
 “ Will bleſſ it, and approve it with a text,
 “ Hiding the groſſneſſ with fair ornament ?
 “ There is no vice ſo ſimple, but affumes
 “ Some mark of virtue on its outward parts.
 “ O, what authority and ſhew of truth
 “ Can cunning ſin cover itſelf withal !”

“ Ex Philosophorum ingeniiſ omnes hæreſes animantur.”

“ Beware, leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit; after the tradition of men, “ after the rudiments of the world, and not after “ CHRIST.”

CHAPTER XI.

HARMONIA SACRA.

THE Apostles proved all their doctrines by the Old Testament Scriptures. They again and again insisted on their scriptural orthodoxy ; that they believed and taught *none other things than Moses and the Prophets*. The only circumstance, and it was but a circumstance, in which they exceeded, was this ; They contended that Christ was come, that Jesus of Nazareth was the very Christ of God, and, that he had accomplished those things *which Moses and the Prophets did say should come*^y to pass in the latter days. The New Testament, or Gospel of Christ and his Apostles, therefore, was no new revelation differing from the law of Moses rightly understood ; but, was an explanation of the revelation in the Old Testament, and a testimony of the completion of the Old Testament prophecies, confirmed by the highest degree of evidence that could possibly be given to authenticate the truth of facts which the Old Testament foretold should be presented to the faith of all mankind, to inspire their hope and give a new moral direction to their practice ; that, with Prophets and Patriarchs, they might walk in

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^y Acts xxvi. 22.

the good old way which leadeth to everlasting life. So far is it from being true, that the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ were preachers of a new religion, or a new way of salvation.

If the wisdom of God be infinite ; if, at one view, He sees all possible reasons, and causes, and effects of things that are and shall be ; if in His will and purpose there be no variableness, neither shadow of turning ; if, from the beginning, He was and is *Jehovah Aleim*, God all-sufficient, in covenant to redeem and save mankind ; if His mercy be no new affection, but eternal mercy, and what He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began : if the true religion be a religion of principle and sentiment depending upon the knowledge of God and the hope of eternal life ; and, if the condition and wants of human nature were always the same ; then, upon each and every one of these principles, we must conclude that God not only made known His ways, His merciful providence in the government of the world, unto Moses and the children of Israel, but, that from the very beginning^z He revealed the same all-important truth, and proposed to men the same holy way of salvation, of which St. Peter testified *There is no other*, and whose meaning in these words is not fully expressed, unless we add *There never was given any other name whereby men might be saved.*

It is not believing in Christ, as to come ; nor believing in Him, as come already, that will save us ; but, believing in Him as the one and the only mediator, taking away sin by the interposition of Himself, and making perfect reconciliation for the people.

^z The early institution of sacrifice proves this. See Gen. iv. 4.

people. For, believing in Him in this character, the heart becomes faithfully attached to the Saviour, and to God in Him; we then confess ourselves to be what we are; we submit to the divine government; we come under God's dispensation of mercy and grace; we have access to Him; and, in this act of believing, penitent sinners are sanctified unto obedience, are affected suitably to the heavenly inheritance, and so are qualified for it: The appearance of Christ to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, at the close of the middle ages of the world, was as early as was necessary, and could not have happened sooner with an equal degree of advantage; and, the faith of any, who lived in an earlier period, would not have been more effectual to save them, if Christ had died a thousand years sooner. It would have made no difference whatever in the principles and moral conduct of men. Therefore, the promise of Christ to come, as it was given to man as soon as sin had entered into the world, was a sufficient foundation for the same religion, which is established on the belief of His actual coming; and, the same religion did subsist from the beginning, which has been propagated in all the world by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, *God at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in times past to the Fathers by the Prophets; but, in these last days, hath spoken unto us by his Son.* The only difference in God's revelations, expressed in this passage, is in the *times* and in the *manners* in which God hath spoken. So far from any intimation of any new doctrine, or new way of salvation,

tion, here is the strongest intimation that the thing spoken, or the subject matter of God's revelations, hath been always, and in every age, one and the same.

Of the divers manners, in which the same truth, the same doctrine, the same way of salvation, was expressed in the Old Testament, which is now more openly preached in the New, I will produce a few instances.

First, the Gospel, the doctrine of grace and salvation, was expressed enigmatically, that is, in sayings, the meaning of which, without further explanation, could not be immediately discerned. Of this kind were the promises to Adam and to Abraham: *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*; and, *In thy seed all nations shall be blessed*. The New Testament reflects so much clear light upon these enigmatical promises, that we cannot doubt their meaning, or that they comprehended the whole substance of the evangelical doctrine.

Secondly, in the Old Testament, the principal characters were typical, that is, they represented persons who were to exist in future times, and figuratively described their actions, and the effects to be produced by them. We are told in the New Testament expressly, that Adam was *the figure of Him that was to come*. We cannot read the affecting story of Joseph without observing a very striking likeness of our Lord's character, of His humiliation and sufferings, of His exaltation and glory, and of the salvation which He accomplished by His sufferings for Jews and Gentiles. The High Priest entering once every year into the Holy of Holies

Holies by virtue of a sacrifice for sin on the day of atonement, sprinkling the mercy-seat, and there praying for the people, undoubtedly prefigured our great High Priest, first offering Himself a sacrifice for us, and then entering into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us, and interceding for sinners by the blood of His cross.

"The Jews certainly understood that David their King was a type of the Messiah, the anointed of Jehovah. They would not, otherwise, have made his psalms a part of their daily worship; nor would David have presumed to deliver them to the Church, to be used in their most solemn acts of devotion to God, if the subject matter of them were of private interpretation, or related only to David himself. After David had been long dead and buried, and had no relation to the Jews, nor to the circumstances of their affairs, his psalms were still in use in the temple service: and, in after ages, the Jews continued to use many parts of these psalms in their prayers for the coming of the Messiah^a."

The second Psalm is to all appearance an inauguration poem, designed to celebrate the wonderful establishment of David in his kingdom. But, in the fourth chapter of the *Acts*, we hear the Apostles declaring with one voice, that this Psalm is a prophetical description of the triumph and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and of the vain opposition of Jews and Gentiles.

In other characters, in the Old Testament, we see the conduct, the temper, spirit, faith, trials, temptations, obedience, and victories of Christians

^a See Dr. Horne's Preface to his Comment on the Psalms.

tians in the Church Militant ; with the love, care, protection, blessing, and discipline of our Saviour, which He exercises towards them that are His. In other characters, we see the hatred, malice, violent opposition and persecutions of wicked men, those wolves, which, in all ages, worry the flock of Christ : we see the hypocrisies of deceitful workers, with the restraints which our Saviour puts upon their designs ; and, the righteous recompence He will render to them that trouble His faithful people.

Thus Abraham, in his calling from Ur of the Chaldees ; his obedience to that call, in forsaking his country and kindred ; his living with Isaac and Jacob as strangers in the Land of Promise ; not only expressed his hope of *a better country*, and that *he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God* ; but, also represented the gracious calling of the Gentiles, and of sinners, in every age, to repentance ; and, it exhibited a pattern of the obedience of faith, and of the holy character of Christians living as strangers and pilgrims on earth. And, no doubt, Cain, Pharaoh, Balaam, Saul, Ahitophel, and many others, were types of the spiritual enemies of Christ and his people, and of hypocrites within the pale of the Church.

A particular part of the history of Abraham, Sarah, Agar, Ishmael, and Isaac, is called *An Allegory* by St. Paul ; and, according to him, represented some striking features of the Christian dispensation. See how he interprets and applies some historical events, in his Epistle to the Corinthians. *Moreover, Brethren, I would not that ye should*

should be ignorant how that all our Fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea ; and, did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink ; for, they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. Now these things were our examples. In the next verse, he saith, *Neither let us tempt Christ*, as some of them also tempted—and, he adds, *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition.*

The whole history of Israel, of their deliverance out of Egypt, their passage through the Red Sea, the transactions at Mount Sinai, their journey through the Wilderness, their entrance into Canaan, and their settlement in that goodly heritage ; their faith and patience, their hope and obedience ; their trials and temptations ; their unbelief, murmurings, and rebellions ; whatever they suffered, and whatever blessings they enjoyed ; their wars, their defeats and victories ; were all types of another Israel, which is called *The Israel of God* : these historical events represent what Christians are experiencing every day, from the time of their conversion to God, to the completion of their hopes in Heaven : and, the history of Israel after the flesh is a parabolic representation of the various conditions of the Church at large, from the time it obtained the name of *The Christian Church*, until the consummation of all things.

Thirdly, Besides these historical events, the Law exactly typified all the doctrines of grace. We are told by an infallible interpreter, that the Levitical

tical priesthood, all the sacrifices and ordinances and services of the Law, were *figures for the time then present, shadows of good things to come*; and, that *the body*, from which the shadows took their form, *was Christ*. It is not necessary to express particularly the design of the legal institutions, of the Passover, of the promulgation of the Law from Mount Sinai—in which *Jehovah Aleim* spake unto the Children of Israel as their sworn friend and ally, as having brought them out of the land of Egypt according to His covenant made with their Fathers—and in which Law, *Jehovah Aleim* expressed the merciful discipline to be exercised towards them that love Him, and the judgments to be poured forth upon them that hate Him—I need not attempt an exact interpretation of the mystery of setting up the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, of its removal without the camp, of the holy place, of what was contained and transacted in it, of the veil, of the Holy of Holies, of the Cherubim, of the Mercy-seat, of the Ark of the Covenant, of the great day of atonement, of the daily propitiatory sacrifices, of the thank-offerings and free-will offerings, of the circumcision in the flesh, of the purifications, of the blowing of trumpets, of the solemn feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, and year of Jubilee, and other institutions of the Law—Suffice it to say, These all were types of greater things, and of things in which all nations are interested. Here we see *Jehovah Aleim* typifying **HIMSELF** as the God of the whole earth; the divine persons covenanting to accomplish the eternal salvation of men, in delivering them from the powers of darkness and from all evil, and bringing them

them into possession of the *heavenly* inheritance—Here we see exactly portrayed the whole economy of our redemption—Here we may view the character, the person, and the offices of our Saviour, and see the great sacrifice for the sin of the world, the shedding forth of that blood without which there is no remission of sins—Here we may contemplate the ascension of our Saviour into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us. The external services of the Law describe also the spiritual worship of the faithful in Christ Jesus, the circumcision of their hearts, their repentance and faith, their separation from the ways of the wicked, their devotedness to God, their intercourse with heaven, the interruptions of that intercourse, and their recovering it again, the thank-offerings of their hearts, and the free-will offerings of their hand. And further, this typical dispensation expresses the government, the conduct and discipline, the mercy and grace, and the righteous judgments of the great Head of the Church towards all Christians, their children, and children's children.

The Law was not of itself an open, clear, and full revelation; but a typical representation of the way of life by a peculiar kind of ceremonial and historical painting. It was a revelation which required an interpreter. It is absurd, and contrary to every rule of sound criticism, to find fault with a composition, or book, for not containing what would be utterly inconsistent with the nature of the composition, and inconsistent with its professed design. And, it is equally absurd to object, that Moses gives a “lame account of the fall;” or, that he speaks nothing concerning a future state; be-

cause, any open, clear, and full declaration, on these subjects, would be perfectly inconsistent with the nature of that dispensation, of which Moses was the minister. And, to say Moses gives a lame account of the fall, is like saying the hieroglyphical writing of the Egyptians gives a lame account of the Egyptian mysteries, merely because the characters are obscure to him that has no key to interpret them, or, having a key, dabbles to use it. Moses, indeed, says nothing openly of a future state : and yet, our Lord, who knew how to interpret him, proved the resurrection out of his writings. And, we find the sect of the Pharisees, which was the popular sect in our Saviour's time, certainly persuaded that there will be a resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust. And, it is notorious, they were in full possession of this doctrine, before our Saviour taught them, and before He gave any assurance of a resurrection by His own. From this fact, we may safely conclude, that the Law, which was the only written revelation they had, taught this doctrine ; and, that either they, or their fathers, were, by some means or other, capable of understanding the Law in its typical, its evangelical meaning.

If children pull away the shoulder from the parent's hand, which would direct their conduct ; and, will not hear the instructions of a father solicitous only for their welfare ; if a prince descend to address his subjects in some public writings, or to grant them a charter of privileges ; and his subjects will not so much as read those writings and will not look into the charter ; if they

they rather infist on what they call their natural rights, and make no other use of the charter of privileges than to cull out of it some detached sentences which they can apply to *countenance* the arguments which they urge for those natural rights they are fond of imagining, as more agreeable to their ideas of the dignity of human nature: In these instances, you would see a shadow of the foolish and undutiful conduct of men, of their base ingratitude and insolence towards God. And surely, you would reflect on the injury they do themselves, who neglect to study the oracles of God, in which our heavenly Father offers to instruct us, and in which the King of heaven and earth grants privileges to his subjects, which are as much above their hopes, as they exceed their deservings.

It is not indeed any just cause of wonder, if they, who are determined to get rid of the divinity of Christ at any rate, that is, to get rid of the whole Gospel at once, stripping it of all its grand peculiarities, should be so bold as to reject the Old Testament: or, which is the same thing, to pour contempt upon it, as a collection of traditional opinions, and an account of unmeaning ceremonies imposed upon a most stupid and ignorant people. If they be blind to the glory of our Lord in the Old Testament, and cannot discern Him to be that Jehovah who appeared in human form to the patriarchs and other Old-testament saints, and cannot see Him shedding His blood in the propitiatory sacrifices of the Law; it cannot be that the Old Testament should appear to their proud reason even worthy of a second perusal. And, the New

Testament itself runs so counter to their prejudices, that of necessity they are, every now and then, at their wit's end for plausible constructions : they meet with difficulties, which the subtlety of verbal and philosophical criticism labours to surmount ; and, which force them, as their last refuge, to expunge part of the sacred text, and to accuse an Apostle of Christ of being a faulty writer. The Atheist will not so much as look upon the Bible : He rejects it in the whole ; and, in spite of his infidelity, whole and entire it will remain. But, the Socinian, pretending to reverence its authority, takes the Bible into his hands, disdainfully throws away part of the sacred writings, and then presumptuously dares to blot, and to pervert other parts of this divine revelation, in order to recommend Deism under the Christian name.

If their prejudices, against the spiritual sense and meaning of the law, blind their minds, so that they cannot see the evangelical truth, which is concealed under the veil of Moses, under the letter and form of truth in the law, they must be blind indeed ; and, they will infallibly stumble at the same stumbling stone, at which the Pharisees and Sadducees stumbled, and fell, and were broken ; and all the words of Christ in the New Testament, and all the arguments of His Apostles, will not be sufficient to prevent their ruin.

How is it possible, that the Old Testament should appear of much greater importance than Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, if people will not see, or are not taught to see, the all-important truth which is the subject of these most ancient writings ? Separate from the evangelical meaning, the books of Moses will

will seem little better than a heap of improbable stories, and to contain a system of religion, not only unworthy of the divine wisdom, but of human reason. Without relation to Christ, and without discerning the great mystery of godliness in the legal institutions, these institutions must appear, what indeed they literally are, in any other view, *beggarly* elements.

Moses put on the veil of ceremonies to assist the Israelites in looking at that glory which was too bright for their feeble organs. But, the carnal Jew, and the Socinian, and others, take the veil and put it upon their own hearts; and so are blinded by the perversion of the sacred text. But they who, through the thin covering of the legal institutions, fix their believing eye on the divine lustre which Moses derived from the Lord of glory, see the consistency of the Law with the Gospel, of the Old Testament with the New; and are ready to cry out, O, what love have I unto thy Law! It shall be my study and devout meditation.

CHAPTER XII.

EVIDENCES THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

THE sixth of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England is entitled *Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for Salvation*. “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to Salvation: So that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture, we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.” According to this Article, the New Testament is not *The holy Scripture*; but, only a part of the holy Scripture. It is the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, taken together as one Whole, which is *The Scripture*, or *The Word of God*: And, both Testaments, not one part of the Bible separately, not the New Testament by itself, but all the Scriptures together, are a full revelation of all things necessary to salvation.

In

In the next Article, our Church expresses her judgment *Of the Old Testament*. “The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises.” This is the judgment of our Church: the Gospel is contained in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament: Christ is the great object of both Testaments, and is set forth in the Old Testament as well as in the New, as the *one* Mediator and *only* Saviour of men: and all the old Fathers under the law, and before that dispensation took place, looked for spiritual mercies, not temporal; for a heavenly Canaan, not a terrestrial paradise, or worldly prosperity.

“The several books of the Holy Scripture, though written at several times, by several persons, in several places, and after several manners, yet do not deliver several, but *one* and *the same* doctrine. Yea, the Old Testament, that was written so long before the New, does not deliver *any other* doctrine than what the New does; neither doth the New Testament deliver *any other* doctrine than what the Old does that was written so long before it; Christ being the sum and substance of *both*; Christ in prophecy the sum of the Law; Christ in history the substance of the Gospel.—Howsoever they may differ in *circumstance*, be sure they agree in the substance.—The Old and New Testament differ in

“ external symbols and Sacraments, though the
“ grace sealed by the different sacraments be *the*
“ *same*.—The Old Testament signified Christ to
“ come hereafter: the New Testament signifies
“ the same Christ, but as come already. The Law
“ promises only what the Gospel relates; but, the
“ Gospel relates also what the Law promises. And
“ so they under the Law saw the Sun of Righteousness
“ drawing towards them; but they under the
“ Gospel behold the Sun of Righteousness risen
“ upon them.—The one is not contrary to the
“ other. Though the one only promises that
“ Christ *shall* come, and the other assures us that
“ He *is* come; yet, they both promise salvation
“ *only on His account*. So that the Fathers of the
“ Old Testament were saved *only by Christ*, who
“ was born after they were dead; as well as the
“ children of the New Testament are saved *by*
“ *the same Christ*, who was dead before they were
“ born. And, therefore, they are not to be heard,
“ or, if they be heard, are not to be believed,
“ who feign that the old Fathers did look only for
“ transitory promises. For the overtures of grace
“ and life were made in Christ *to them under the*
“ *Law*, as well as to us under the Gospel: it must
“ needs follow, that *the same promises*, that we
“ have made to us under the Gospel, were *also*
“ *made to them under the Law*. And the promises
“ that we look for, being spiritual, and not only
“ transitory, the promises that they looked for
“ likewise, were not only transitory, but also
“ spiritual. The sum of all is this: everlasting
“ life and happiness was offered in Christ, under
“ the Old as well as under the New Testament.

“ So

" So that the old Fathers did not go one way to
" heaven, and we another; but the same way
" that we go now, they went then; and they had
" the same promises then, that we have now.
" The truth whereof appears from *Scripture, Reason, and the Fathers.*"^b

We love the Prophets, said the holy Ignatius, a disciple of the beloved John, *because they also preached the Gospel and hoped in Him (Christ) and waited for Him.* And again, *The Prophets and Apostles received one and the same holy, good, leading, true, and teaching Spirit of God by Jesus Christ.* For, there is one God of the Old and New Testament, and one Mediator between God and men, and one Comforter working in Moses, and the Prophets, and Apostles. All the Saints, therefore, were saved in Christ, trusting in Him, and waiting for Him.—Let them not, therefore, said Irenæus, ascribe the unbelief of some persons to the Law; for the Law did not forbid them to believe in the Son of God; but exhorted them to the contrary by telling them, there was no other way for men to be healed of the old wound which was given them by the Serpent, but by believing in Him, who, according to the likeness of sinful flesh was lifted up from the earth upon the tree of martyrdom.—Origen bears this testimony to the agreement of the Old and New Testaments; *He, who is instructed in the divine music, knows that all the Scripture is a perfect and well-tuned instrument of God's, which sendeth forth to those who are desirous to learn it, ONE HARMONIOUS and salutary voice, though composed of different sounds.*—Chrysostom tells us, There

^b Comment on the XXXIX Articles by Bishop Beveridge.

There is no difference but of names in the two Testaments, no opposition or contrariety. For the Old Testament is called Old from the New, that is, as to the time of writing, but that is not from any opposition or contrariety, but the difference of the name only.

These quotations are not produced here as authorities, to prove that there is only one truth, or doctrine of salvation, in the Old Testament and the New ; but merely to shew that this is no private or novel opinion. For, if the Reader think so, he will naturally pay less regard to the evidences which I hope to produce from the Scriptures ; and probably he would neglect the Old Testament entirely, or never look for his Saviour in the writings of Moses. But, if these suffrages of the Church of England in her XXXIX Articles, and of her pious Bishop Beveridge, and of the Fathers in the Primitive Church, shall have sufficient weight to suspend the force of preconceived opinions, and dispose my Reader to examine with candour what I am going to lay before him, I may hope he will be convinced that there is no opposition between the Law and the Gospel, but that the Old and New Testaments perfectly harmonize.

My design is to prove, that the Law was a typical dispensation ; that the Old Testament history was likewise typical ; that the spiritual or evangelical meaning of the Law was well understood during the Old Testament dispensation ; and, that the old Fathers had the same faith, the same hope, built upon the same foundation, that we have—in other words, that they had the same religion before

fore Christ was born, which Christians have under the New Testament dispensation, notwithstanding the great difference in the external administration of those things which are merely the circumstances, or accidents, of religion, and not religion itself. Consequently there is a perfect unity of design in the Old Testament and the New.

In the first place, let us attend to the clear and express evidences, in the New Testament, that the Law was intended to be a figurative, or typical, representation of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Epistle to the *Colossians*, where the Apostle mentions circumcision, the ordinances of the Law, the meats and drinks which were forbidden, and those which were permitted to be used, the holy days, new moons, and sabbaths, he adds, *Which are a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ.* The comparison is not merely of unsubstantial things with that which has real substance ; which may be where there is no likeness at all ; but, of a shadow, as a *representation*, or *figure* of a thing, with that particular substance which gives the shadow its particular form, or shape. That this was the Apostle's design, will appear plainly by examining some parallel passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which there can be no doubt of his using the word *shadow* in this sense.

We are expressly told, Heb. x. 1, that the Law had a *shadow of good things to come.* Here the Apostle plainly intimates the idea of a *resemblance* in the shadow ; for, he adds, *And not the very image*

image of the things; which words convey no meaning, unless we suppose him speaking of a *resemblance*, to wit, that the Law was a representation rather than the perfect and essential form of things; for, how could the Law have any thing more than a resemblance, when the Archetype was not yet come into real existence? In the eighth chapter, he uses the word *shadow*, in connection with another term, which determines its meaning. He saith, *The Priests that offer gifts according to the Law, serve unto the EXAMPLE and SHADOW of heavenly things*; that is, of the spiritual things of Christ's kingdom.

These spiritual things were revealed to Moses in the mount of God; and, he was commanded to represent them to the Jews in the hieroglyphical description of the tabernacle and its services. For, when the Apostle had said, *The Priests and their offerings served to the EXAMPLE and SHADOW of heavenly things*, he added, *As Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the PATTERN shewed to thee in the Mount.* By this, it is plain, that Moses was shewed, probably in a vision, the great Archetype of the Law, and was then instructed in the purpose of God to have the Archetype exactly portrayed in the legal institutions.

In the ninth chapter, the Apostle observes, that *almost all things are by the Law purged with blood; and, without shedding of blood is no remission.* He adds, *It was necessary that the PATTERNS of things in the heavens should be purified by these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices*

crifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the FIGURES of the TRUE; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; namely, as our great High-Priest, having first put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.—And more particularly in the seventh and eighth verses, where he mentions the High-Priest entering once *every year*, not without blood which he offered for himself and the errors of the people; he adds the reason of it in these plain words, THE HOLY GHOST *THIS SIGNIFYING*, that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing—the repetition *every year* shewing the insufficiency of the Levitical institutions, to take away sin, and directing the worshippers to look forward to one perfect and every way sufficient sacrifice. And, when this sacrifice was actually offered, an invisible hand rent the veil, which obstructed the view of the most holy place, from the top to the bottom, and laid it open; to signify, no doubt, that Christ had obtained *eternal* redemption, and had now opened the way for repenting sinners believing in Him, into the Holiest of all, that is, into the heavenly state of things, and into heaven itself.

These texts express with sufficient clearness, and more clearly it could not be expressed, that the Law was a figurative, or typical representation of things relating to the salvation of mankind. But, that no doubt might remain of the typical design of the Law, that is, to prefigure things to come, the Apostle informs us that the first tabernacle, in which were offered gifts and sacrifices,

and

and the services of which consisted in meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances, was **A FIGURE FOR THE TIME THEN PRESENT**; which could not have been said, if it had not been intended to **PRE-figure** things **THEN FUTURE**.

This is the positive Evidence, which I meant to lay before my Reader, to prove that the Law was a typical preaching of the Gospel. But, there are arguments out of number, beside this positive evidence, to be drawn from what the Apostle states in this Epistle; in which he compares the Levitical Priesthood and Sacrifices with the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ, and the various Offices and Services of the Law with the doctrines of Christianity: and, from the many passages in the New Testament, where the legal services, and the historical facts under the old dispensation, are interpreted in their evangelical sense and meaning.

It is very natural to suppose the evidence, which is convincing, and perfectly satisfying, to my own mind, must be sufficient to convince and satisfy my Readers. I shall therefore omit the arguments to be deduced from the comparisons just now mentioned, and shall rest my proof entirely upon the positive evidence which I have produced from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

I shall only desire, in addition to this evidence, that my Reader will recollect that Christ told the Jews, Had ye believed *Moses*, ye would have believed me, for *he wrote of ME*; that, when our Saviour instructed his Disciples going to Emmaus, He began at *Moses*, to expound unto them from

his

his writings the things concerning Himself, and particularly proved *out of them* that *Christ was to suffer death*, and then *to enter into His glory*: I would desire my Reader to remember, that, before King Agrippa, St. Paul declared he held and preached *none other things* than those which *Moses did say* should come, to wit, that *Christ should suffer*, that *He should be the first that should rise from the dead*, and should shew light unto *the people, and to the Gentiles*; and, that this same St. Paul, when he was brought a prisoner to Rome, called the Jews together, and expounded and testified the kingdom of God, that is, the Gospel dispensation, persuading them *concerning Jesus out of the Law of Moses*. Now, I would press my Reader to consider, if the Gospel dispensation was expounded and testified *out of the Law of Moses*, if Jesus be the *subject of Moses's writings*, if it was proved from thence that *Christ was to suffer death for every man; and rise again, and enter into his glory*, and that he should *shew light unto the Jews, and to the Gentile nations*, to what part of these writings of Moses will my Reader turn and find evidence in proof of these doctrines? Certainly, he may read the writings of Moses, a thousand times, and never see these doctrines in them, nor any proofs to confirm the truth of these doctrines, unless he be instructed to consider the Law as a typical representation of Gospel truths, and know how to interpret the obscure enigmatical sayings, the historical paintings, and the hieroglyphical representations in the writings of Moses, as a peculiar mode of evangelical preaching.

If the historical facts in the Old Testament, and
the

the institutions of Moses, were not typical, and a kind of hieroglyphical writing of evangelical truths, all St. Paul's arguments in his Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and the Hebrews, and many arguments in his other Epistles, fall to the ground, as an artful attempt to captivate the imagination, rather than to convince the judgment by sound reasoning. But, this is inconsistent with St. Paul's character, and inconsistent with what appears to be his manner of proceeding. He argues out of the writings of Moses with the utmost seriousness, with an evident conviction in his own mind that these writings contain all the doctrines of Christianity, and with a perfect persuasion that the proofs which he produces from them, will be as satisfactory to those who believe the divine legation of Moses, as any series of the most stupendous miracles can be, when produced to the senses of unbelievers.

To say that St. Paul only *accommodates* some detached sentences in the writings of Moses to countenance his doctrines, or that he only *illustrates* the doctrines of Christianity by the historical facts and ceremonies of the Law, is a mere pretence to invalidate the force of his arguments: it is the attempt of a sophist to reduce the Apostle's proof to a *Bath-Rol*, an echo from heaven; and represents this learned man and great Apostle, as a very inconclusive reasoner indeed. The art of accommodation and illustration, however ingenious, produces no evidence to satisfy an inquisitive mind. The accommodation of old, well-known sayings and customs, to some present purpose, may enliven a serious argument; and illustration may more clearly

clearly express the meaning of a proposition of syllogism—it may dazzle the mind of the ignorant, and rivet the prejudices of those whose minds are already prepossessed ; but, cannot possibly produce any rational conviction in those who will carefully examine the ground which lies before them. If, therefore, we consider the Apostle's *manner* of arguing, on the important subject of justification, and other doctrines of Christianity, we must conclude, in reverence of his character, and in deference to his apostolic authority, that the historical facts and ceremonies of the Law were typical, express images of evangelical truths.

Many great men, of illustrious character for their learning, have employed their talents upon the sacred writings, in what may be called literal, verbal, historical, and philosophical criticism. They have confirmed the authenticity of disputed texts ; they have purged the sacred volume from interpolations, the errors of transcribers ; and, in a very masterly manner, they have vindicated the sacred Scriptures against the objections of Infidels, and have produced a course of the most convincing arguments, to establish the divine authority of the Bible, as containing a revelation from God. Their learned labours have an important use : great advantage may be derived from them. But, it must be observed, with respect to the Old Testament in particular, that any one of good natural abilities, and of patient application, may attain to a critical knowledge of these sacred writings, and be firmly persuaded that they contain a divine revelation, and yet continue an unbelieving Jew with the veil upon his heart ; or an

unbelieving *Gentile*, an alien from the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, an utter stranger to that important sense of the holy books intended, in such a variety of instances, to bear testimony to the Saviour of the world; that sense, which is called the spiritual or evangelical sense.

In proof that learned men may distinguish themselves by their critical skill upon the surface of the Scriptures, and believe that the Bible contains a divine revelation, without believing that revelation, or understanding the true meaning of the Scriptures, or feeling their importance, I need only mention the fact, that many such learned men disagree among themselves, and have disputed what is the true meaning of the Scriptures, what is the nature of the revelation contained in them; and, that many of them have appeared to be utterly destitute of the spirit of Christianity, and as worldly and carnal as professed Infidels. This is no new thing in the earth. The Scriptures were studied and criticised, with infinite labour, by the learned Rabbies, the Scribes, and Pharisees. They believed that the writings of Moses contained a revelation from God, yet did not believe that revelation^c: they studied and criticised the Prophets, and yet did not know, nor understand, the voice of the Prophets.

Let us not, therefore, only nibble at the shell; but endeavour, by all means, to get at the sweet kernel

^c *There is one that accuseth you, But if ye believe not his writings, how even Moses, in whom ye trust. For shall ye believe my words? John v. had ye believed Moses, ye would 45, 46, 47. have believed me: for he wrote of me.*

kernel, so full of spiritual nutriment and comfort. Let us esteem the whole Book of God, *The Bible*, as an inestimable treasure, which excels all the riches of the earth ; because the fruit thereof extends itself, not only to the time spent in this transitory world, but, directs, disposes, and prepares the minds and hearts of men, for the enjoyment of that eternal life and happiness which are above in heaven.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PATRIARCH ABRAHAM.

THE history, contained in the books of Moses, is a very important part of the typical dispensation. Something has been already noticed on this subject. The field is a very wide one. It is not my design to examine every part of it particularly. I shall confine myself to the History of the Patriarch Abraham; and, will only notice the most striking incidents, to prove that the history in the books of Moses was designedly typical.

The History of Abraham is chosen, in preference to any other part of the Old-testament history, because Abraham is called *The Father of the Faithful*, and is set forth as the great Exemplar, or Pattern, of all believers in every age of the Church; which, of itself, justifies the idea of a typical design in the Old-testament history: And, this character of Abraham, as Father of the Faithful, and Pattern of believers in every age of the Church, prompts us to expect stronger expressions of evangelical truths in his history than in any other. In addition to this ground of preference, there are many passages in the New Testament, which will guide us in the interpretation of

of this history; to which if we strictly adhere, as I hope to do, the play of a warm and lively imagination will be precluded.

We are plainly told, in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, that God *preached before the Gospel unto Abraham*; and that the subject of this Gospel was the universal salvation of men, *that God would justify the Heathen through faith, saying unto Abraham, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* Again, in the same Epistle, we are told, that *the promises were made to Abraham and his seed.* *He saith not And to seeds,* in the plural number, *as of many;* *but, as of one* in the singular number, *And to thy seed, which is Christ;* either Christ personally, or Christ mystically; for Christ and all believers are one spiritual body. That these promises relate to the eternal salvation of all true believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, is evident by the use which St. Paul makes of this History of Abraham in treating of the doctrine of justification. And, that Abraham understood the promises in this sense is probable, at least, from the evident impossibility that they should ever be fulfilled in a literal sense: for, how could all nations, an innumerable host of families, possess and enjoy the inheritance, if the inheritance, to which these promises relate, were the earthly Canaan; which is so small a portion of the globe, that, in a large map of the world, it may be covered with a finger? And, that these promises were spiritual and evangelical promises, appears from this circumstance, the natural children of Abraham were excluded from all interest in them.

St. Paul argues, in his Epistle to the Romans,

that Ishmael, who was a son of Abraham, had nothing to do with them ; no, not though he was circumcised. And, from hence he concludes, that Israel after the flesh, who were the natural descendants of Abraham, and were circumcised, must look for a title to these promises in some other principle, which will afford a surer ground of hope than their natural relation to Abraham, and their observance of the legal institutions. It was necessary that they should be born again, that is, should acquire another title to the eternal inheritance. The blessing belongs to the children of promise ; to them, who, whether natural children of Abraham, or Gentiles by extraction, birth, or education, are treading in the steps of Abraham's faith. These are *counted for the seed* : these are the spiritual children of Abraham, *Israelites indeed, the Israel of God* ; and, to them the promises were made, or made in their favour. To argue thus from the history of Abraham, if that history were not designedly typical, or if the promises were not spiritual, or if, beside the literal sense, they had not an evangelical design ; would be the most inconclusive method of reasoning that can possibly be pursued, and utterly unworthy of St. Paul's character ; who, in the opinion of judges, “ was one of the most accurate, concise, and ob-“ trusive reasoners that ever forced the meaning of “ words upon the understanding of mankind.”^d

But further ; the Gospel was not preached generally in that enigmatical saying, as it may appear to us, and certainly is, taken by itself, and when read in the Mosaic history, which could not ex-
prefs

^d *Burgb's Confutation of Lindsey.*

press things more plainly, in consistence with the nature of a typical dispensation.—Abraham did not only apprehend that there would be salvation in his seed, some way or other; but, the Gospel was particularized to him: he apprehended the method of divine grace and mercy. Otherwise, it could not be said the Gospel was *preached unto Abraham*; for, preaching the Gospel consists in unfolding the mystery of grace.—Again, the Apostle faith, *To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.* But, what sort of promises are they, and what kind of object do they present to any one's faith, if the meaning of the promises be not understood? He adds in the next verse, *The covenant*, meaning the covenant of grace and mercy, *was confirmed before of God in Christ*; that is, it was revealed to Abraham, and *confirmed by oath*, giving him assurance that God would certainly accomplish all the promises contained in the everlasting covenant. This, surely, could not be said, if there had been no typical design in these transactions, and if Abraham had not understood the typical design; if he had not understood that the promised blessing *should come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ*, that is, that an innumerable company, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, should be *raised up again to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*. That this was meant by the blessing, the promise, and oath of Jehovah, expressed to Abraham, is plainly declared in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; where the Apostle represents this bles-

sing, this promise and oath, as designed for the consolation of all *the heirs of promise*, that is, of all who *fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them*, which as the anchor of their souls, supports them in the lively expectation of a future resurrection to the enjoyment of God in heaven. This is plainly the Apostle's meaning, and the meaning which he attributes to the Mosaic history; but which cannot be extracted by any art of criticism from the history itself, unless the history be designedly typical.

In the eighth chapter of St. John, we find our Lord speaking of Abraham as one who was well acquainted with his person and character. *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, *THIS did not Abraham.* And again, at the fifty-sixth verse, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.* Then said the Jews unto him, *Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?* or, which is the same, Has Abraham seen thee? Jesus said unto them, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.* If there be any meaning in these words, the lowest construction that can be given, is, that Abraham understood the promise of blessing in his seed, as relating to Christ; that he had a lively apprehension of our Saviour's advent; that he earnestly desired to see the coming of Christ in the flesh; and God so far favoured his wishes, that Abraham saw the process, order, and accomplishment of the promise in the plainest typical representation of things

to

to come, a representation which gave entire satisfaction to his mind, in the way of anticipation, and filled him with unspeakable joy.

We will now turn to the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we find a very particular description of Abraham's evangelical character, and where some parts of his history are represented as having a *parabolic* meaning, or designed to express his faith and hope towards God in regard to a future state. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed : and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.—These all (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and a multitude besides), died in faith, not having received the promises, that is, the accomplishment of them, but having seen them afar off, in a distant period and future state of things, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country, from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned : But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called Their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.*

My observations on this passage will be introduced with greater advantage in our review of
Abraham's

Abraham's history, as related by Moses ; which will be the subject of the next chapter. I shall only notice at this time, that it is evident from this Scripture, that Abraham understood God's promise of Canaan *spiritually*, that is, as designing a future state, an heavenly inheritance ; and that, if the Apostle had purposely intended to describe the principles, the views, the temper, and the life of a holy Christian, he could not have expressed the Christian character more perfectly than in what he here relates of Abraham from the history of this Patriarch in the books of Moses.

Let us now turn to another passage^e, where St. Paul describes several incidents in the history of Abraham, and attaches to them a most important evangelical meaning. *It is written, that Abraham had two sons ; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. But he of the bond-woman, was born after the flesh : but he of the free-woman, by promise,* Which things are an allegory ; that is, a true history of things ; but which, besides the truth of history in a literal sense, have a spiritual meaning, and were designed by the Holy Ghost to represent the state of the Church in the following particulars. *For these, viz. the bond-maid and the free-woman, are, or signify, the two covenants ; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage which is Agar, or was represented by Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia.*—Agar was the name given by the Arabs to this mountain ; and therefore, by a peculiar propriety of name, the Sinai covenant was fitly represented by her. The Apostle is speaking here

of

^e Galatians iv. 22.

of the Law in the *letter*, without the glory which shone on the countenance of Moses, that is, without its typical, evangelical meaning; without which, the Law is a mere covenant, or law, of *works*, and constrains men to labour in the spirit of bond-slaves, without enjoyment, or hope, of spiritual life and liberty—And, this Agar, or covenant, and the children of this covenant, *answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children*, describes the present state of the Jewish Church. *But Jerusalem which is above*, the true Church, every member of which is born of God and knoweth God in the spirit, *is free, which is the mother of us all*;—for all sincere believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jefus, that is, who submit themselves to God, according to the spiritual intendment of the typical institutions, and have no confidence in the flesh, in the legal observances, are heirs of a heavenly inheritance, and are citizens of the new Jerusalem—*Now we, Brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But, as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now*—the carnal Jews expressing their jealousy and hatred against those who are Israelites indeed; and all carnal Christians, and self-righteous moralists, and all children of this world, of whatever cast or character, will do the same, in opposition to those who are spiritual—*Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman*: that is, the legal institutions shall no longer be observed; the

the Sinai covenant shall be abolished, vanish away ; the Jews shall no longer be the peculiar people of God exclusively ; nor shall they have any title to the eternal inheritance, by virtue of that covenant of works, to share with those who are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. The Law in the letter having respect only to the earthly Canaan ; and the political righteousness of man, and all his highest virtues, having relation only to this present world, where they meet their reward ; cannot be any ground of hope towards God in relation to that state of things with which they have no necessary connection. *So then, Brethren,* by the evidence of this history in its typical meaning, *we*, who truly believe in Jesus, *are not children of the bond-woman*, under the law to serve in oldness of the letter, *but children of the free-woman*, of Sarah, the true Church, by virtue of the promise of life in Christ Jesus : We serve in newness of the spirit, and are free indeed ; and therefore heirs of the eternal inheritance.

I have, somewhere, met with an evasive account of St. Paul's application of the history of Abraham in this passage ; which, if a true account, would preclude the use which is intended by quoting it. It has been said, When St. Paul wrote this Epistle to the Galatians, there was a prevailing fashion and fondness for allegorizing ; and, that St. Paul, in conformity with this taste, quotes the history of Abraham, by way of accommodation, to illustrate, not to prove, his doctrine : so that the Holy Ghost intended no such thing in the Old-testament history, as is here represented by that history in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.

Galatians. Not to say, How inconsistent this is with the dignity and gravity of St. Paul, as an inspired Apostle ; it is surely paying a bad compliment to his judgment, as a sensible man and a scholar, to suppose him guilty of conforming to the most corrupt taste that ever disgraced men of letters. It does not appear true, that, when St. Paul wrote this Epistle, there existed in the Church any such fondness for allegory as is pretended. There was, indeed, in the Jewish Church, a sect, called *Disputers*, teachers of allegories and mysteries, whose fabulous expositions of the Scriptures bred questions and strife of words : but, St. Paul in 1 Cor. i. and 1 Tim. 1, expresses the severest censure against them ; and is it reasonable to suppose that he himself would ever fall into a practice which he so justly condemned ?

In *Origen's* time, indeed, imagination ran wild in this way of interpreting the Scriptures. The Scriptures were treated as a nose of wax, and moulded to every one's face and fancy ; and this fondness for allegory then threatened the ruin of Christianity, as much as the contrary extreme, the affectation of common sense and philosophical reason does at this time. But, base coin proves there is, somewhere, coin of intrinsic value and agreeable to the standard of truth. And, surely, this fondness for allegory had never prevailed in the Church, if there had not been a true allegorical meaning in the Scriptures of very great importance.

I would further remark on this subject, that there would be some appearance of a just pretence for the supposition, that St. Paul quotes this part
of

of the history of Abraham by way of accommodation, if it could be said, This is the only part of the Old-testament history which St. Paul uses in this manner. But, when references are frequently made in the New Testament to the history in the Old Testament, as a kind of historical painting, to represent and vindicate the doctrines of Christianity, the supposition must be regarded as a very vain pretence. And, if this supposition be a just representation of St. Paul's design in quoting the history of Abraham, of Agar and Sarah, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, it would go very far towards invalidating the arguments by which he proves and vindicates the important doctrine of justification by faith in the crucified Redeemer; for, his arguments are drawn from the history of Abraham, and from that part of the history which is intimately connected with the circumstances to which this passage refers. And surely, his arguments lose all their force, and indeed are no arguments at all, if the history of Abraham be quoted by way of accommodation, to illustrate, not to prove, his doctrine; that is, if the Holy Ghost did not intend the history to convey a spiritual, or typical, meaning.

St. Paul called this part of the history of Abraham, which he quoted in Gal. iv. *An Allegory.* But, does it follow, that the other parts of his history are not an allegory too? The literal sense of the history, in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, expresses no more than a promise that Abraham should have a son and heir, from whom would descend an innumerable progeny to inherit the land of Canaan. This promise Abraham believed; and,

and, his believing this promise, under the discouragement of natural impediments, was accounted to him for righteousness; because, in believing the promise, he gave glory to God, to his truth and all-sufficiency^f. The literal sense of the history, in Genesis xv. which, as I have said, relates to the temporal interests of Abraham and his family, no more expresses the Christian doctrine of justification by faith in Christ crucified, than that other part of the history quoted by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, concerning Agar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac. Every commentator and expositor of the Scriptures, who treats of the doctrine of justification from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, or would illustrate and explain the Apostle's arguments deduced from this history, is obliged to have recourse to the hidden, or mystical, sense of the history of Abraham, and particularly of the promise in Gen. xv.; that is, he is obliged to consider the historical facts as an allegory. It is only upon this ground, that St. Paul's arguments, in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, on the subject of justification, taken from the history of Abraham, are conclusive; namely, the certainty of the allegorical, or typical, sense of the history, as relating to Christ and to all the spiritual seed of the Patriarch.

I have now laid before my Reader those passages in the New Testament, which, taken together; and, the scope of the arguments contained in them duly considered; will, I trust, vindicate the idea of a typical design in the history of Abraham. I have also guarded my Reader against the subterfuge, under

under which the importance of this history, as a parabolic representation of evangelical truths, has been denied. I may now recur to the history itself, and venture to present it to my Reader as a lively type of Christian experience, of the repentance, faith, hope, piety, self-denying conduct, the life and death, of all the Saints of God.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM.

To make my ground as firm as possible, and to prevent the necessity of producing an argument to justify every particular circumstance of the interpretation, which I mean to give, of this history; I must desire my Reader will recollect, and impress upon his memory, that Abraham is called *The Father of all them that believe^g*, whether Jews or Gentiles; that righteousness is imputed to them also, *who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham*; that this faith consists in *believing on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead^h*, and has respect to this circumstance in the death and resurrection of Jesus, that he was *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justificationⁱ*; that whoever are truly the children of Abraham *will do the works of Abraham^k*, particularly in paying a proper regard to the important character of Christ, and rejoicing in Him as risen from the dead^l; living detached from the world^m, willingly

N obedient

^g Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16, 17, 18. Gal. iii. 7, 9.

^h Rom. iv. 24. ⁱ Rom. iv. 25. ^k John viii. 39, 40. ^l John viii. 56.

^m John xv. 19. John xvii. 16. Gal. vi. 14. James iv. 4.

John xii. 25. ⁿ John ii. 15. ^o Peter ii. 11.

obedient to the divine preceptsⁿ, sacrificing whatever is most dear in this world to the name of God^o, and then yielding up the ghost, at last, in the blessed hope of immortal life^p.

The first thing, which presents itself to our consideration, in this history, is the calling of Abraham to the knowledge of God. He did not attain to this, to know and believe in Him, by any natural light, by the aid of philosophy, by any efforts of his own, by any natural instinct, or any kind of intrinsic virtue. But, the God of glory *appeared*, that is, *revealed Himself*, unto Abraham, when he dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees: and the **LORD** said unto him, *Get thee out of thy country, &c.*—Faith comes by *hearing*; and hearing, by the word of God. *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*^q. And, never was there a holy man upon earth, that could boast of a single ray of spiritual light, which was not derived, to him, from the Father of lights, either mediately or immediately, by revelation.

When the revelation of God was communicated to Abraham, there was a general apostacy from the spirit and truth of the primitive religion. Even Abraham's family, Terah and Nahor, served *other Gods*^r.—Such was the state of religion in the world, when the **LORD** came to Abraham, and called him to forsake his country and kindred, to go into a land, which, said He, *I will shew thee*.—Abraham was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

ⁿ Rom. vi. 16, 17, 18. ^t John ii. 3, 4. Chap. v. 3.

^o Rom. xiv. 7, 8. Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33.

^p 2 Cor. v. 1. Titus ii. 13. ^q John iii. 27. ^r Joshua xxiv. 2.

vision. He went out, not knowing whither he went. He came and dwelt in *Haran*; which lay in the way to Canaan.

Here, we have a pattern of the first dawnings of grace. The state of every man, Jew and Gentile, previous to the revelation of Jesus Christ, was a state of apostacy and alienation from God¹. Even they, who are born and educated where the light of revelation shines, until it shine into their hearts, are minding earthly things, preferring the creature to the Creator, which is idolatry²: they are living in sinful practices, serving divers lusts and pleasures³; or, at least, are serving God hypocritically⁴, having a *form* of godliness without either light in their minds or grace in their hearts⁵. —It is the Word and Spirit of God, which produces the conversion of men⁶, and excites them to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. But when the heart is first impressed by the apprehension of divine truths, our views are general and very indistinct. The awful thought of an Hereafter, of Eternity, of Heaven and Hell, alarms the conscience, and disposes us to break our connections with this delusive world, to forsake our sins, and to seek a better inheritance than can be found in transitory enjoyments.

Under the influence of this imperfect light, we begin to repent: we make some efforts to reform our lives: we shun familiar converse with the wicked, and shun their pursuits: we begin seriously and in good earnest to assume a religious character;

¹ Romans iii. 9, 19, 23. Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3, 12.

² Col. iii. 5. ⁴ Tit. iii. 3. ⁵ Matth. xv. 7, 8. ⁷ 2 Tim. iii. 5.

³ James i. 18. ¹ Peter i. 22, 23.

and then for want of further information, we sit down, contented with this little progress, as Abraham in *Haran*. But, the Christian character is not yet formed.—The ministry of John the Baptist, and all its best effects, were but *preparatory* to the kingdom of Messiah.

After Abraham had dwelt some time in Haran, or *Charran* as it is called in St. Luke's history of the Acts of the Apostles, the Word of God came to him with greater clearness. He removed him into Canaan, gave him a distinct view of the land of promise, and assured him that he should have it for a possession.—Thus, by degrees, we attain unto a more lively apprehension of the future state; to a more certain assurance of it, and to a more comfortable expectation of possessing that eternal inheritance, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised.

“ With the Patriarch's joy,
 “ Thy call I follow to the land unknown.
 “ I trust in Thee, and know in whom I trust:
 “ Or life, or death, is equal: neither weighs:
 “ All weight in this—O, let me live to Thee !”^a

But, how could Abraham hope to possess the land of Canaan, occupied as it then was by tribes and nations; and he himself far advanced in years, and not yet the father of a family? *Lord God*, said he, *What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* Therefore a son was promised, and an innumerable progeny: *He that shall come out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.* And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them:

And

^a *Night Thoughts.*

And He said unto him, *So shall thy seed be.* And he believed in the **LORD**, and He counted it to him for righteousness.—It was this belief which supported the hope of Abraham and perfected his character, as a pilgrim in the land of promise. And it is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and our faith in Him, as the only means of obtaining the inheritance of eternal life, which establishes our hope in God, and completes the Christian character.

In my attempt to illustrate this typical history, it is beside my purpose, if I notice the spiritual character of Abraham. Yet, because it is so necessary to the general plan of this work, that this spiritual character of the Patriarch be perfectly manifested, I shall allow myself to pass from the literal history of Abraham, to remark that, in waiting long for the promised seed, in the conception and birth of Isaac *extraordinem naturæ*, in his innocent, obedient, and submissive life, in the sacrifice of this only and beloved son, in the age of Isaac when he was sacrificed, and in the place where he was sacrificed, and in receiving him again in a figure as risen from the dead, and in every other particular circumstance of Isaac's life recorded in the Scriptures, Abraham saw the most lively type of the Son of God. This hope of the *heavenly* Canaan and his consolation in death were derived from the promise and oath of Jehovah, and grounded upon the promised seed, that is, Christ, the Saviour of the world. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.* In this, the character of Abraham and the character of faithful Christians are one and the same.

We must now attend to the pilgrimage of Abraham in the land of Canaan. He repeatedly received a promise of this country, that God would give it *to him* for a possession, and to his seed after him. Yet, he only sojourned in it, as in a foreign land ; not settling in any one part of it, nor building a fixed habitation for himself ; but dwelling in moveable tabernacles, or tents, with Isaac and Jacob, passing from one part of the country to another. He was always in the habit of a traveller ; shewing, or declaring, by his manner of living, that he had some country in view to which he was journeying. From these circumstances, Abraham, and those with him, who led this travelling kind of life, were called Hebrews, that is, *The Travellers*, or *The Pilgrims*.

Now the Apostle argues, *If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out*, that is, *Haran*, it was not far off, and they might have found frequent opportunity to return thither again^b. What country then had they in view ? It was not within the borders of Canaan certainly ; for, here they gained no inheritance : no, not so much as to set their foot on, to call it their own property. Nor was it without the borders of this

land,

^b The world, the native country of spiritual pilgrims, *from whence they came out*, is never far off from them in any part of their pilgrimage. They have the same propensities, the same natural attachments, with all other people. And here is the trial, and herein is the victory of their faith ; that, with these propensities and attachments, they resist the temptation, and cleave with full purpose

of heart to the Lord, and practically prefer the things eternal. Some, alas ! who join the caravan of pilgrims, return back again. *Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.*

2 Tim. iv. 10. But, we are not of them who draw back unto perdition ; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Heb. x. 39. See 2 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12.

land, near it. They were travelling to and fro continually; which plainly shewed they were not at home; and, that the country they looked for was neither near, nor at a distance in this world. It was evident, the Apostle tells us—evident by these circumstances, that they *desired a better country, even an heavenly one;* and, instead of either moveable dwellings, or fixed habitations in this world, that they *looked for a city which hath foundations,* more durable than were ever laid by the most ingenious architect, even eternal mansions, *whose builder and maker is God.*

But further, they plainly understood the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead. They believed the promise of God, that He would give them an inheritance. They confidently expected, and had a sure and certain hope, that God would fulfil His engagement to each of them personally. They even died in faith, depending upon God's veracity, and relying upon His almighty power, to accomplish the purpose of His eternal mercy. And surely, if in the extreme act of life, they confidently hoped to inherit the promises, they must have expected a resurrection from the dead. *These all died in faith, not having received the accomplishment of the promises, in the present life, but having seen them afar off in a remote state of things, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, looking for a better country, the heavenly Canaan,* which the dead cannot inherit but by a resurrection from the dead.

There is a text in the New Testament, often quoted partially, without regard to the context and its precise meaning; which, when so quoted,

seems to contradict the opinion that the Old-testament saints understood the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead—¹ Tim. i. 10.—*hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel;* as if the Gospel were nothing else than the preaching of the Apostles; ^c or, as if the Gospel had never been preached before our Saviour rose from the dead. But surely, if the Gospel be a revelation of a future state, and of a future resurrection; or, if this doctrine be so essential a part of the Gospel, that, this omitted, there remains no other evangelical truth that can be presented to the faith of mankind; ^d and, if the Gospel was preached unto Abraham, and the children of Israel, as it certainly was as well as unto us, ^e then the doctrine of a future state, and of a resurrection from the dead, was preached unto them, and they understood it as well as we do now. And, that they did so, we have the testimony of the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: *He faith, The Patriarchs died in faith, looking for a better country, even an heavenly inheritance:* He informs us that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; *for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward;* and what reward could this be, but the resurrection to life in the heavenly Canaan, for he found it not in this

^c Life and immortality may be said to be brought to light through the preaching of the Apostles, in regard to the witness they bore to Christ, as having actually accomplished those things which the Old Testament prefigured and foretold;

^d 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17.

and, in regard to the open and general publication of this doctrine to the Gentiles sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, to whom it was as the breaking forth of the sun at midnight in his meridian lustre.

^e Heb. iv. 2. Gal. iii. 8.

this world? And, he tells us, that others, who suffered torture, *would not accept deliverance* from the most cruel deaths, by complying with the unjust and impious requisitions of their persecutors, *that they might obtain A BETTER RESURRECTION.*

But, to what end, or purpose, did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lead this pilgrim-life?—Consider the circumstances of the times in which they lived. The settled inhabitants of Canaan were fast degenerating towards a total and final apostacy; into which they fell after a few centuries. When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sojourned among them, the Canaanites had not filled up the measure of their iniquities. Our merciful God had not yet given them up to a reprobate mind. He had pity for them, and called them to repentance. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were the ministers of God to them for good. In the manner of their living, they declared plainly that they were seeking some country; and, it would surely be a matter of inquiry among the neighbouring tribes, whither they were bound. The answer would be, and their holy lives gave the answer,
“ We seek a heavenly country. There is a God
“ who judgeth the earth: There is a future state
“ of rewards and punishments. God has revealed
“ to us His purpose of mercy, as well as His deter-
“ mination of judgment to come. These prin-
“ ciples once influenced the conduct of our fore-
“ fathers and yours. But now, you are departing
“ from God, and these principles have lost their
“ force. The true religion is corrupted: you are
“ minding

" minding earthly things. And, we live in this
" manner to testify our faith and hope in God, in
" regard to a future state of things; and, by this
" testimony of our faith, we warn you, and call
" you to repentance, that you may escape the just
" judgment of the Almighty."

This reason for the pilgrim-life of the Patriarchs expresses only a confined and temporary utility. The design was far more extended. The external dispensation, under which they were placed, was to *themselves* a type of the higher dispensation of Providence: it was their lesson of instruction, by which they were taught the heavenly doctrine of God's mercy and grace. And, the history of their pilgrimage is a part of the typical revelation, and teaches all succeeding ages how to live, and how to die. He must be very little conversant with the Scriptures, who does not know that there are very many passages in the New Testament, which refer to the patriarchal pilgrimage; and which express the Christian character by an application of this typical history to the evangelical state of the Church. In truth, the New Testament speaks in such terms of the disciples of Christ, that it is almost impossible not to consider the Christian Church as a continuity of the society of the ancient Hebrews; with this only difference, that now the form of the parabolic discipline is dropped, but the moral character of those spiritual pilgrims remains to be exhibited to the unbelieving world in greater perfection.

Can my Reader forget the *election* and *calling* of Abraham, or the principle of his conduct, when he

he reads in 2 Theff. ii. 13, 14. *God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you, by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ?* Can he forget the *hope* and *expectation* of Abraham, and that *special Providence* which guided and protected him, when he reads in St. Peter^f *God hath begotten us again to a lively hope*, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time?* Christians, therefore, *look for the new heavens and the new earth, that better country, wherein dwelleth righteousness*^g; and, they know assuredly that, if their earthly house of *this tabernacle* were dissolved, they have *a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*^h, where they shall possess a *better and an enduring substance*ⁱ. Upon this ground, and with this principle of action, they are to be detached from the world, to be disengaged from its little politics, to have their conversation in heaven^k, setting their affections on things above^l: They are to be a distinct society^m; to have no fellowship with the wicked in the unfruitful works of darknessⁿ, nor to be conformed to this present evil world^o; but, on the contrary, *girding up the loins of their mind*^p,

and

^f 2 Peter i. 3, 4, 5. ^g 2 Peter iii. 13. ^h 2 Cor. v. 1. ⁱ Heb. x. 34.

^k Phil. iii. 20. ^l Col. iii. 2.

^m John xvii. 21, 23. Rom. xii. 5. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

ⁿ Ephes. v. 11. ^o Rom. xii. 2. ^p 1 Peter i. 13. Luke xii. 35.

and having their *feet shod* with the preparation of the Gospel of peace^q, in the habit of pilgrims, to be *holy in all manner of conversation*^r, passing the time of their *sojourning here*^s in an entire devotedness to God, *shewing forth*^t His praises who called them out of darkness to be his witnesses in the world. For, what is the end proposed by the holy lives which Christians live, but that they may be as salt to the earth^u, *reproving* a crooked and perverse nation; shining as *lights* in the world; and *holding forth* the word of life^x, so as to draw the attention of mankind to God and the concerns of futurity. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as *strangers and pilgrims*, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having *your conversation honest* (beautiful, venerable, engaging) *among the Gentiles*; that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, *they may, by your good works, your exemplary conduct, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*^y.

The texts referred to, in the preceding paragraph, give the true interpretation of the patriarchal pilgrimage. And, I must add, This pilgrim-life, this holy, heavenly character of Christians living in fellowship one with another, is properly *The Christian Religion*. Christianity knows nothing of solemn temples, and sacrificing priests, nor of any priesthood, to discharge the solemn pomp of sacred rites, in external religion, with a view to engage the propitious favour of the Deity, or to worship the supreme existence. *The Lord*
of

^q Epheſ. vi. 15. ^r 1 Peter i. 15. ^s 1 Peter i. 17. ^t 1 Peter ii. 9, 10.

^u Matth. v. 13. ^x Phil. ii. 15, 16. ^y 1 Peter ii. 11, 12.

of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, &c.^z. But, we honour God, and worship Him, by a life far removed from secular designs, and entirely devoted; a life that will carry its own evidence with it, to prove, this at least, that we are actuated by a principle of faith in God, and have within us a sure and certain hope of eternal life through that gracious Lord whose name we bear. This was the religion and worship of the primitive Christians^a: and, it was the means of propagating Christianity in the world. Their holy union in love, their heavenly conversation, their righteous lives, and their triumphant deaths, expressing a hope full of immortality, witnessed for God, testified of Jesus Christ, engaged the attention of mankind to the truth and importance of the Christian faith, and produced more numerous conversions, than all the learned arguments which have issued from the press, and all the sermons delivered from

the

^z Acts xvii. 24, 25. John iv. 21, 23, 24. 1 Tim. ii. 8. James i. 27.

^a The subject of this paragraph is very important, and requires a more perfect discussion than will consist with the plan of this work. To supply the defect of this paragraph, which is not sufficiently explicit, to prevent a misapprehension of my meaning, I shall add, by way of appendix, a Visitation-Sermon preached since this work was prepared for the press. The Reader will find in it a more perfect explanation of my idea of that external worship, by which the God of Christians is owned and honoured in the world, and in which, I think, the *Christian Religion*, principally, if not exclusively, consists. When the primitive Christians met together in one place, they participated together the sacrament which was, not only a sacrament of Christ's body and blood, but of their holy union in love. As for prayers, which they occasionally or statedly used; this was not an exercise appropriate to Christians, but common to Christians, to Jews, and Gentiles.

the pulpit in modern times. And, it was with good reason that *Tertullian*, addressing the enemies of Christianity, said, “ Do your worst, and rack “ your inventions for tortures for Christians ; it is “ all to no purpose. You do but attract the world, “ and make it fall in love the more with our re- “ ligion. The more you mow us down, the “ thicker we rise. The Christian blood you spill “ is like the seed you sow ; it springs from the “ earth again, and fructifies the more. Many of “ your Philosophers have set themselves to write “ the world into patience and a contempt of “ death ; but, their pompous glitter of words has “ not made the tithe of disciples that *our lives* “ have done. That which you reproach in us as “ stubbornness, has been *the most instructing mis-* “ *tress in proselyting the world* : for, who has not “ been struck at the sight of that you call stub- “ bornness, and *from thence* pushed on to *look into* “ *the reality and reason of it?* And, who ever “ looked well into our religion, but came over “ to it ? ”

This argument has been wanting to the many learned vindications of the truth of Christianity, which have been published to the world in the present century ; and which, though far superior in composition, in elegance of style, if not in strength of reasoning, to any thing of the kind that was ever presented to the public by former Apolo-
gists, have, through the want of this principal ar-
gument, failed of success. God will not suffer his
ark to be touched, nor, if it totter, to be supported,
by unhallowed hands. This design is to propagate
virtue, holy and heavenly dispositions, rather than
opinions ;

opinions; which, however true, will not raise a man above the condition of apostate spirits. Besides, the most forcible arguments, which mere ingenuity can offer to infidels, will ever be answered by this sarcastic reproach, *Your reasonings are plausible; and they produce the same degree of conviction in our minds which they produce in yours.*

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XV.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF EVANGELICAL TRUTHS UNDER THE OLD TESTA- MENT DISPENSATION.

A QUESTION has frequently presented itself to me, while I have been intent upon the subject of the typical dispensation—Did the Jews, under the Old Testament, understand the mystical, the spiritual, or evangelical sense of all these enigmas and types?—This question is not stated with any view to gratify an idle curiosity: Probably, the answer will discover more clearly the importance of the Old-testament dispensation, the consistency of the Scriptures in general, or the unity of design in the whole Bible; and, may point out the right method of studying the Oracles of God.

Let me first remark the reasonableness of the supposition, that the Jews understood the evangelical, or spiritual, meaning of their law.

If the first promise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, had not been explained to Adam; if, by some means or other, he did not understand the spiritual meaning of this promise; it had been to him *Vox, et præterea nihil*, found without sense; and he could not, in consequence of

of this promise, and in reference to the meaning of it, have called his wife's name EVE, as the mother of all *living*^b. And, if it be reasonable to suppose that Adam understood this enigmatical prophecy, it is equally reasonable to suppose that the Jews understood it; or might have understood it: Because a revelation, which could not be understood, would be no revelation at all to them; and Moses's account of the solemn denunciation of God, upon the introduction of sin into the world, and of this prophetical promise, would appear to the Jews as unimportant as it appears to modern philosophers, who are utterly ignorant of the great designs of Providence.

What should we think, if the solemn ceremony of eating bread and drinking wine, which we call *The Sacrament*, had been enjoined to our

o practice

^b וְיָדַעַת שֶׁנָּאֵת וְיִרְאַת, revixit, sanus, sanatus, salvis fuit—unde EVA mater omnium viventium. Gen. iii. 20. et AVE, vive. Leigh, Crit. Sac.

Or rather, according to Mr. Parkhurst, יָדַעַת to declare, discover, knew. From this root, Eve, as we pronounce her name, was called יָדַעַת, that is, *The manifestor*, Gen. iii. 20. because she was, or was to be, the mother of all that live, i. e. to God, spiritually and eternally, as being the mother of Christ, the seed already promised, ver. 15, who is the *Life* of believers. See John i. 4. xi. 25. Col. iii. 4, but especially 1 John i. 2; where, in the expression *The Life was manifested*, the Apostle plainly alludes to the very name given to Eve, and the reason of it,

If it be said, Eve received this name, in consequence of God's mercy repecting Adam and Eve from immediate death, to signify that she should yet be the mother of an innumerable offspring, or literally the mother of all living; I answer, This cannot be the meaning. In this sense, she was the mother of Cain's wicked race; yet, not their mother in the prophetic sense, in which this name was imposed. The race of Cain were the seed of the Serpent, or represented the children of the wicked one, who should be at enmity with those who are called the seed of the woman, and who should bruise the Serpent's head: and, it was in relation to these, she was called Eve.

practice without any explanation? If we had been left entirely in the dark, as to the design of this institution? If Christ had said, *Do This*, without adding, *This is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me?* And, if he had said, *Drink This*, without adding, *This Cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me?* In this case, the Sacrament would be, what indeed it is to many, who know not the design of the institution, a mere ceremony, an unmeaning ceremony, and in itself no reasonable service to God. The observance of it might feed our superstition, and be regarded superstitiously as a compensation for our vices; but could not possibly afford any spiritual food or nutriment, to our faith, and sanctify our hearts unto obedience. And surely, if we cannot suppose that Christ would have instituted the Christian Sacraments, without affording us means of information concerning the nature, the design and use of these Sacraments; or, that he would leave us intirely in ignorance of the spiritual, or evangelical, meaning of these holy ordinances, for nearly two thousand years; it is equally unreasonable to suppose that the Jewish Church was commanded to observe the sacraments of the Law, for the same portion of time, in intire ignorance of the spiritual and evangelical meaning of that figurative dispensation.

A type and the antitype can no more exist together, than a shadow and the substance, which gives its being and form, can exist in the same space.

space. And a typical law cannot admit the anti-type into its composition : it cannot admit any open declaration of the truth, which, the very nature of a typical dispensation requires to be concealed under its form ; for, the admission of such open declaration would destroy its very existence as a typical law. Yet, the reason of the thing, the end proposed, requires interpreters to perfect its design ; for, without interpreters, to declare its end, it would not typify any thing to them who live under it, but be a mere unmeaning ceremonial law. We are, therefore, obliged to assent to the reasonableness of the supposition, that, by some means or other, the Jews understood the evangelical, or spiritual, meaning of their Law.

If it be asked, Did the Jews in general, or all the Jews, understand the meaning of their Law? This question may be best answered by supposing the following case. Suppose after three hundred, or a thousand years to come, a person should ask another well learned in ecclesiastical history, Did the Christians, Christians in general, or all Christians, about the year 1790, understand the true principles of Christianity, and the nature, the meaning, and use, of the Christian Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? What would be the true answer to this question? It would be said, perhaps, The Gospel was never better understood ; that the true principles of Christianity were never better known ; that the nature, the meaning and use of the Holy Sacraments were never better apprehended, than in the year of the Christian æra 1790 ; that at that time there were many holy, heavenly minded disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ ;

but, that these many were very few in comparison of a far greater number of ignorant and profane professors, who knew little or nothing of the Gospel, or of the spiritual use of the holy ordinances ; and, that the generality of the Christians were stupid, insensible, besotted, ignorant and vicious in the highest degree. This, I believe, is an exact representation of the Jewish Church, allowing for different times, in which light and darkness, in various degrees, alternately prevailed.

In our Saviour's time, the great body of the Jews were ignorant of the Law, that is, of its spiritual meaning ; for, in the *letter*, it was never read or known, more than at that time. But, in that best sense, they knew not the Scriptures, nor the voice of their Prophets, though read every sabbath in their synagogues. Yet, there were some, who had a spiritual discernment and taste, and who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. Old *Simeon* was one of these : and, perhaps, there never lived one Christian, who more perfectly understood the salvation of God and the way of salvation by Christ, than did that venerable Old-testament Saint. And, if the far greater number of Jews, at the time of our Saviour's birth, were ignorant of the spiritual meaning of the Law, to a very great degree, it was not for want of means of information : they might, and ought to have known better. Otherwise, they could not have been so frequently blamed, and sharply reproved, as they were by our Saviour, for their ignorance. *Art thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these things ! O fools, and slow of heart to believe what the Prophets have spoken,* including Moses the great

great Prophet of the Jewish Church : *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ? And, beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

That my Reader may not be surprised at the ignorance of the Jews, nor think their ignorance any argument against the supposition, that the spiritual meaning of the Law was understood under the Mosaic dispensation ; let him consider, how plainly the doctrines of Christianity are expressed in the New Testament, and the meaning of the Christian sacraments ; and then let him reflect, how few, who call themselves Christians, understand the doctrines of Christianity and the right use of the sacraments ; how few use the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper profitably to their soul's health. Yet, this will not be produced as an argument that the doctrines of Christianity, and the nature and use of the sacraments, are not as well understood now as in any former age of the Church. We cannot, therefore, argue from the ignorance of the Jews in our Saviour's time, nor from the ignorance of the generality of the Jews at any other time, that the evangelical meaning of the Law was not understood. We must rather say, upon these considerations, It is reasonable to suppose that the typical design of the Law, of the legal sacraments, and of sacrifices especially, was explained to the Jews ; that they must have understood, or might have understood, and was their fault if they understood not, that the Paschal Lamb, and other sacrifices were types of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Not that all, or most of them, at any time, had this spiritual discernment ; for, on account of their wilful ignorance and blindness and hardness of heart, *with many of them God was not well pleased* : they were generally a carnal and besotted people ; though, perhaps, not in greater proportion than Christians are now. We see not all, nor the greater number of Christians truly enlightened, and understanding the nature of the Christian sacraments : indeed, the leading doctrines of the New Testament are so little known and understood, by professing Christians, although the manner in which they are expressed in the New Testament is exceedingly plain and open, that it can never be any matter of surprise to us, if the majority of Jews were ignorant of the true meaning of their Law, whatever lights they had to direct them to the spiritual interpretation of it.

These lights were the Priests, the Levites, and the Prophets. They were the Preachers, who taught the people knowledge. The Lord spake unto Aaron, and to his sons with him, to be a statute for ever throughout their generations, that they should consecrate themselves to this service, faithfully to teach the pure doctrine of revelation, the statutes which the Lord had spoken unto them by Moses^c. *Jehoshaphat* sent some of his Princes to teach in the cities of Judah ; and with them he sent Levites and Priests ; and they taught in Judah, and had the book of the Law with them ; and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people^d. In the latter days of *Joash*, after the death of the pious *Jehoiada*, Judah was guilty of a grievous

^c *Leviticus* x. 8, 9, 10, 11.

^d *2 Chron. xvii. 7, 8, 9.*

a grievous apostacy, and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem. Yet, the Lord sent Prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord : and the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said unto them, *Thus saith the Lord—because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you*^e. In Hezekiah's reign, it is said, the Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord^f. And, in Josiah's time, the Levites taught all Israel^g.

We have a very particular account, in the Book of Nehemiah, of the religious manner in which the law was read and expounded. All the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the Water-Gate ; and they spake unto Ezra the Scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord commanded to all Israel. And Ezra the Priest brought the Law before the congregation, both of men and women and all that could hear with understanding. And he read therein before the street from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women and those that could understand ; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the Law. And Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood—and Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people ; for he was above all the people : and, when he opened it, all the people stood up : And, Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God ; and all the people answered, *Amen, Amen*, with lifting up their hands ; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the

^e 2 Chron. xxiv. 19, 20. ^f 2 Chron. xxx. 22.

^g 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30, and xxxv. 3.

ground. And Joshua, and Bani, and others mentioned by name, and the Levites caused the people to *understand the Law*. So they read in the book, in the Law of God *distinctly*, and *gave the sense*, and *caused* them to *understand* the reading. And this reading and expounding the Law was at that time so affecting that all the people wept.

It has been pretended, that the Jews, during their captivity, had lost the knowledge of their own mother-tongue; and, that this expounding the Law consisted in this, that, as Ezra read the Hebrew copy of the Law, Jeshua, Bani, and others, with the Levites, translated sentence by sentence into the Chaldee language. Perhaps, there never was a more improbable story than this. Can it be supposed that the Jews, who have always been extremely attached to whatever distinguished them, and never to any thing more than to their own language and the Law of Moses, and who have ever made it their practice to read the Law in their religious assemblies and in their families^b, and who must be supposed to have carried Hebrew copies of the Law with them to Babylon, should have forgotten, or lost, their native tongue in the short

^b These words which I command thee shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9. xi. 18,

19, 20. He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children. Ps. lxxviii. 5, 6.

short space of fifty or sixty years¹? But, supposing this; who that knows any thing of the awkward busines of speaking by an interpreter, and, that a pathetic speech will lose almost its whole energy,
when

¹If, with Rollin and other learned men, we date the commencement of the seventy years captivity in the fourth year of *Jehoiakim*, the far greater number of the Jews were not in exile so long as seventy years. The first captivity, in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, was a partial one; Nebuchadnezzar taking only some of the people and some of the sacred vessels from Jerusalem. *Jehoiakim* reigned eleven years. Upon the death of *Jehoiakim*, *Jehoiachin*, or *Jechonias*, succeeded. This prince surrendered himself, in little more than three months, to the king of Babylon; who carried him and his family, with all the sacred vessels that had remained, and a multitude of Jews to Babylon. After him *Zedekiah* sat on the throne; who reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, and stoutly resisted the forces of the king of Babylon; which he could not have done, if a vast multitude of Jews, probably the far greater part of the nation, had not still remained in Judea under his dominion. Jerusalem was at length taken; and, with the Temple, all its fortifications were destroyed, and the palaces burnt with fire. In the following year, *Nebuzar-adan*, general of the Chaldean army, took away the rest of the people, leaving a sufficient number of the

poorer sort to cultivate the fields and vineyards.

Now, taking the time of the captivity at a medium, between the fourth year of *Jehoiakim*, and the total overthrow of Jerusalem, it will amount to little more than sixty years. The captivity of those Jews who adhered to *Zedekiah*, and who resisted the forces of the king of Babylon during the greater part of his reign, and defended Jerusalem and other cities of Judah, was little more than fifty years. The young men, and children, infants excepted, had learned the Jews language before they were led into captivity. The infants, and children born of captive Jews, would necessarily learn the Hebrew tongue of their parents, of their brothers, sisters, and kindred, which was the only language in which they could converse with them. By degrees, the Jews would attain so much of the Chaldee language, as would be sufficient for so much intercourse with the native inhabitants as necessity required. But, the language which would be most familiar to them, would be the language of their parents and kindred, with whom only their religion and prejudices would permit familiar intercourse. Whether it be Portuguese, High Dutch, or a corrupt Hebrew dialect, which is spoken

when delivered through the intervention of an interpreter, can ever imagine the Jews were so much affected by Ezra's reading the Law in Hebrew, a language they are supposed not to have understood, and others translating sentence by sentence into the Chaldee language, and commenting upon the *literal* sense, that the whole multitude wept aloud? But, if the Jews understood the Hebrew text in its literal sense, and Ezra with his assistants declared the spiritual meaning of the Law, then the affection of the people can be easily accounted for.

The

spoken by the Jews of this nation in their families, we know they are but imperfectly acquainted with the English tongue, and pronounce it barbarously. We may therefore imagine the little influence, which the short captivity in Babylon could have to produce a total or general ignorance of the Hebrew tongue. Certainly, the Jews were not acquainted with the Chaldee or Syrian language before the captivity: for, in Hezekiah's reign, the grandfather of Zedekiah, there were only a very few of the learned and nobles who understood it. See 2 Kings xviii. 26. And if, to these considerations, we add the partiality of the Jews for their own language, and their veneration for the written Law, it is highly improbable that they had lost the Hebrew tongue in the short time of their captivity; which was not so long as to prevent some of the captives comparing the new Temple with the old, whose magnificence they well

remembered—It is said, that Ezra read the book of the Law to all that could bear with understanding; and, that the ears of the people were attentive to the book of the Law; not to the interpretations of Jeshua, Bani, and the Levites, but to the very book of the Law itself, to what Ezra read out of the Hebrew Scriptures to all that could hear: and surely, they would not have been so attentive, if they had not understood the language, i. e. the Hebrew text. And, for what reason in the world was the book of the Law read distinctly? for, the most distinct reading would not convey the meaning of an unknown language to the most attentive audience, nor assist any one to understand a comment upon it in another tongue. See Mr. Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon, under the word Εζραι, where the Reader will find many strong arguments to prove that the Jews had not lost the Hebrew tongue during the captivity.

The truths of Revelation, which relate to the eternal salvation of men, are so important in themselves, and so interesting to every one, that they cannot be listened to, under any disadvantage of expression, without a tendency to affect the heart; and, they are truths, which God hath appointed to this very end, and which he hath promised to accompany with a divine influence. We have seen men of education, men of learning and taste, affected by the most homely preaching; by the same sermons which drew the attention of the illiterate vulgar. They have felt the Gospel to be the power of God unto their salvation: their souls have been captivated by the interesting doctrines of Revelation; so as to render them insensible of all the disadvantages of bad delivery, of incorrect language, of disorderly method, and even of a mixture of error and enthusiasm with which the sublime truths of Revelation have sometimes been adulterated. Even the disadvantage of speaking these truths through the intervention of an interpreter is not sufficient to prevent the effects which they have a tendency to produce. An American missionary, preaching to the wild Indians, has seen torrents of tears pouring down the cheeks of his audience, though he delivered the doctrines of Christianity to them under the great disadvantage of an imperfect interpreter. But, there is nothing in the literal sense of the Law, which is sufficient to overcome this disadvantage, and produce the extraordinary effect of a general weeping.

Nehemiah and Ezra and the Levites, who taught the people, stilled the weeping multitude, by telling them that they ought to rejoice, because
the

the joy of the Lord was their strength; and all the people went their way to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them; not because the words had been expressed in the Chaldee language; but because they understood the sense and meaning of the gracious truths which they had heard. And, what that sense and meaning is, we know, by an infallible interpreter, to be the doctrine of eternal salvation through the Messiah, who is *the end of the Law*, and to whom Moses and all the Prophets bore this testimony, that *through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*. And, if any thing could make the Jews both weep and rejoice, who had learned the evil of sin by their late sufferings in captivity, and were now brought to repentance, it must have been this revelation of the divine mercies, a type of which they had experienced in their return from captivity, assuring them of forgiveness and eternal redemption by Him that was to come, and who would be a greater Saviour to them than Cyrus the Persian.

There is one circumstance more, in this history, which I would mention. Immediately after reading the Law on the following day, the Jews who had returned from captivity kept the feast of tabernacles. They sat under booths, representing their condition as sojourners here below, and passengers on their way to the heavenly inheritance. Since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, there never had been such gladness as at this time. Then the pilgrims of the wilderness rejoiced on getting possession of the holy land; now the exiles rejoiced

rejoiced in their return to the possession of it. And, my Reader may well imagine their great gladness, if they considered this as a type and pledge of a better resurrection than their deliverance from captivity ; and if they knew that all true pilgrims, or Hebrews, are travelling through the wilderness of this troublesome world, under the conduct of a gracious and almighty Redeemer, to the certain possession of eternal rest in a happier Canaan.

But, it may be asked, If the Law were a figurative and therefore an obscure representation of evangelical truths, and required interpreters to expound its meaning, from whence did these supposed teachers, the Priests, Levites, and Prophets, derive their light and knowledge ? Certainly, they did not derive their light and knowledge from the Law itself *merely* : for, if these could understand its spiritual meaning without any extraordinary assistance, so might the people too. I answer, They derived their light and knowledge, partly from an established method of studying and interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures, which, probably, is what our Lord meant by *The Key of Knowledge*. But, principally, they derived their light and knowledge from the instruction of other preceding Prophets and teachers, as we do now. For, faith comes to every one by hearing those, who are enlightened with the true knowledge and understanding of God's word ; who declare the doctrines of Revelation upon the evidence of miracles to unbelievers ; or, they direct the attention of those that acknowledge the divine authority of the Scriptures to the Law and to the testimony ; and point out to them the unobserved and disregarded

disregarded truths, which they wish and endeavour to command to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Still it will be asked, From what source did the preceding Prophets and teachers derive their light? From other Prophets and teachers, still preceding them, till we come to those Prophets and teachers, who derived their light from the Father of Lights by direct and immediate revelation. The Lord often appeared personally, in the human form, to the Patriarchs, and communicated to them the knowledge of Himself, and of the merciful plan of His providence. In this way Abraham was enlightened with the knowledge of the divine mysteries, and rejoiced to see the day of Christ. He could not have contemplated, with an exstacy of joy, the birth, the life, the propitiatory sufferings, the death and resurrection, of the Saviour of the World, typified in his Isaac, if the doctrine of Christ had not been explicitly revealed to him. While the Church was in the Wilderness, and long before and after, the *Shekinah*, the visible presence of the Lord, probably in the human form, and the glory attending it, appeared in the cloud between the Cherubims, in the Holy of Holies; who often spake to Moses *face to face*, both in the holy mount and in the sacred tabernacle. And, from time to time, during the course of many centuries, an extraordinary communication of the prophetic spirit enabled holy men of God to speak immediately from God himself, and to declare His mind and will, in relation to things present and things to come.

Besides

Besides these extraordinary means and miraculous interpositions, there were the Schools of the Prophets. In these Schools, they, who devoted themselves to the sacred office, were taught; not the foresight of future events, which cannot possibly be acquired by art, by study and discipline, but, the knowledge of traditional revelation. In these seminaries, the sons of the Prophets learned to interpret the Scriptures, to expound the Law, to declare the spiritual meaning couched under the letter of the Commandment, to reveal the mind and will of God intimated in the various dispensations of His providence, to excite in others a lively expectation of the full accomplishment of all God's gracious promises in the Messiah, and to persuade the people to submit themselves obediently to the Lord their God in hope of a resurrection from the dead to eternall life—*unto which, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come*^k.—This instruction, which was communicated in the schools of the Prophets, was accompanied with that divine influence, which is vouchsafed, in all ages, to those who are sincerely devoted to the sacred ministry. And from all these sources, and through this channel of traditional instruction, came all that light which the Priests, the Levites, and ordinary Prophets possessed; and from them, the light was derived to the people^l. For, thus instructed and accomplished,

^k Acts xxvi. 7.

^l "The Schools of the Prophets were little Universities, and Colleges of Students. For their Governor, they had some venerable Prophet, inspired with the Holy Spirit, and that partook of divine revelations. The Scholars were not inspired indeed

plished, the holy men of God became public teachers. This was the proper and stated office of the Prophets; in which sense, the words *prophet*, *prophesying*, and *prophecy*, are frequently used in the Old and New Testaments.

In exact agreement with this account of the state of things under the old dispensation, St. Paul charged Timothy, *Thou my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus: and the things THAT THOU HAST HEARD OF ME among many witnesses, THE SAME COMMIT THOU TO FAITHFUL MEN, WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO.* This is what was practised in the schools of the Prophets—What *they* had heard, and learned, and received, from preceding Prophets, the same *they* committed to faithful men, who would be able to diffuse the truth abroad, and to transmit it from generation to generation. In this way, the light of Revelation has been transmitted through the Prophets and the Apostles, and through a con-

tinued

" indeed with the same prophetic Spirit, but received prophecies from the mouth of their master. He revealed to them those things that were revealed to him, of the will of God, and the state of the people; of the times and events of *Israel*, and above all, of the mysteries of the Gospel; of the *Messias*, of his coming, times, death, resurrection, and those things that were to be done by him. In these small Universities, the Prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should

" come (as the Apostle Peter speaks) inquired diligently of Salvation: searching what, or what manner of time that was, which was pointed out by the Spirit of Christ, that was in them, when he foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. These things, not to be fetched out by the mere and bare study of the Law, were here taught; and so the studies of the Law and Gospel together rendered the ministry of the divine Word complete." *LIGHTFOOT.*

tinued succession of holy men of God, down to the Church in the present day; that is to say, all the light we have, in knowing and understanding the Word of God, is a transfused or traditional light communicated to us by enlightened teachers. They who have no light cannot communicate light to others: they who are ignorant cannot teach: the blind cannot lead the blind. And, it is neither by the Scriptures alone^m, nor by immediate inspirationⁿ, nor by both together, that any one is

P enlightened

^m If the Scriptures *alone* be sufficient, how comes it to pass that the Jews are not profited by them? They have the sacred Scriptures, and read them, yet remain almost 2000 years in that outer darkness into which they fell by disobedience. This is evidence in fact, that the sacred Scriptures *alone*, without other means, are not sufficient to enlighten mankind. And, there are evidences in Christian countries of the same insufficiency, Arians, Socinians, Antinomians, Enthusiasts, and millions of mere Formalists and carnal Professors of Christianity have read the sacred Scriptures, and some of them with a critical eye, yet are not made wise unto salvation.

ⁿ The extraordinary, or miraculous influences of the Spirit, have long since ceased. And it is of the very essence of enthusiasm, if any one pretend to be inspired, or instructed in the knowledge of God's truth by *immediate* revelation.

The *ordinary* influence of the

Spirit is inseparably connected with traditional revelation, and concurs with the testimony of those who believe and know the truth, and who declare and witness it. Where this light is not, there the Spirit is not; and there, the sacred Scriptures are as a sealed book. This light may be extinguished as well under the profession of Christianity, as it was under that of Judaism. In some places, and in some particular Churches, it has been extinguished. And, if this light were once utterly extinguished in the catholic Church, the Christian world would fall into the same outer darkness into which the Jews are fallen; and then, neither the sacred Scriptures, nor the ordinary influence of the Spirit, would be sufficient to restore the light of life. Indeed, this influence would not then exist, for the reason before mentioned, Where the light of traditional revelation is not, there is not the Spirit in His ordinary influence. In a state of things nearly approaching to that

which

enlightened and sanctified. I must repeat it again, Faith comes by *hearing*, and by hearing those who themselves have heard and been taught the truth of the Gospel by preceding teachers; for, *how shall they hear without a preacher?*

Of what use then are the Scriptures? And what occasion for the influence of the Divine Spirit? Much every way. The Scriptures contain a revelation

which is here described, the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost, as at the first propagation of Christianity, when the light of traditional revelation was almost totally extinguished in the Jewish Church, and absolutely so in the Gentile world, would be necessary again to renew the face of the earth.

Our Saviour did not begin His ministry by referring the Jews to the sacred Scriptures, to *discover* the truth, and find out who and what He was. John the Baptist preceded Him, declared the apostacy of the Jews, preached repentance, bore testimony to Christ, and to his proper office; and our Saviour first *declared* Himself, whom and what He was, and then referred the Jews to the sacred Scriptures, saying, *Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me.*

I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Matth. xxviii. 20. With *YOU*; not with the world; not with them who have never heard nor known the Truth; but with *YOU*, namely, by my Spirit, *that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of TRUTH, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him:* but, *YE know Him, for He dwelleth WITH YOU, and shall be in YOU.*

When the truth, or any part of the truth, has been taught, and has made some impression upon the mind and heart, and yet has not produced any real conversion to God, some future concurrence of circumstances, as the loss of friends, and health and wealth, and threatening danger of life, a storm and tempest, or earthquake, may become means by which the Holy Spirit will revive a recollection of what we have heard, and excite a stronger impression of the truth, and excite attention to the neglected Scripture, and so produce a real conversion to God when there is no living witness immediately present to preach the word of life. There have been many instances of this. But, there never has been one instance of a man, who, by the Scriptures alone, or with the ordinary, or extraordinary, influence of the Spirit, without any living witness, or teacher, has been made wise unto salvation. If the Scriptures alone, with the ordinary influence of the Spirit, were sufficient, how came Philip to be sent to the treasurer of queen Candace?

velation from God, and the evidences which authenticate this revelation? But, so closely connected is the human mind and heart with the material system, and with our interests in it; so strong is our natural bias against the very purpose of the Divine Revelation, and so many and great are our acquired prejudices against it; that we are too apt to doubt, to dispute and disbelieve the authority of this revelation: And, when its authority is acknowledged, we are equally ready to overlook the most important truths, to mistake and pervert the meaning of the Scriptures, and to imagine they mean any thing rather than what they do mean. It is therefore necessary that holy men of God should let their light shine forth, should declare the Truth which they have heard and learned. It is necessary also, that there be some established rule, to which these living witnesses may appeal, as the standard and umpire of Truth; and, to which the people may have recourse, that they may examine whether it be indeed the Truth of God which has been declared unto them. And, it is equally necessary, that some secret, unperceived influence, in perfect consistence with moral liberty, should counteract both the natural disinclination of the heart to receive the Truth, and the prejudices of the mind against it. That rule is the written word of Revelation. This secret influence is the ordinary grace of the Divine Spirit; which excites attention to the traditional light of Revelation, and to the witnesses and evidences of its truth; which disposes us to search the Scriptures, blesses our sincere inquiries, opens our understanding to perceive the truth, and our hearts to embrace it with

pious affection as the Truth of God, when it is clearly manifested to us. And, it is this gentle Air divinely breathing upon faithful souls, which causes the Truth to produce all those salutary effects, which the Apostle called *The fruits of the Spirit.*

Let us return again to the old dispensation—When at any time the Jews had provoked the Lord, in his righteous judgment, to withdraw the prophetical Spirit; when a general depravity had infected the prophets themselves, and secularized them, and they were no longer enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and neither taught, nor understood, the most important meaning of the divine Law; then it was said, *The sun is gone down over the prophets^P;* they had no light in them; and then the people had *a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord^q.* *Her Watchmen are blind,* said Isaiah; *they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.* They, who, by office, were Seers to the Church, could not see; they had no spiritual understanding, nor discernment; they had no heart in their work;

^P Micah iii. 6.

^q Amos viii. 11.

* This ignorance will consist with a great degree, and with every kind, of secular learning—and of theological learning too; that kind of theological learning, which busies itself with the political interests of the Church, with its forms and external regimen, with the evidences of Revelation,

with philological researches, and with the arts of accommodation in reconciling the doctrines of Revelation, and its precepts of self-denial, to any of those systems and practices which may chance to be in fashion in times of great declension from the spirit and practice of pure and undefiled religion.

the hungry sheep looked up, and were not fed: and, as for the rest, the generality of people, they were too much like their teachers; *for, the Prophets prophesied falsely, and the people loved to have it so.*

In the prophecy of Malachi, there is a very severe and very alarming reproof of such besotted ministers ; which suits as well those Christian Priests and Levites, who have depraved the Gospel of Christ by accommodating its doctrines to some philosophical system, or to their own vain and enthusiastic opinions ; or who, having drank deep into the spirit of the world, have fallen infinitely below the majesty, the tone, and spirit, of salvation. *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a father, where is mine honour ? and if I be a master, where is my fear ? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O Priests,*

P 3 that

gion. In such a state of things, the last thing suspected is IGNORANCE; and, who will venture to charge those with ignorance who greatly excel in so many points of useful and ornamental learning? The most unequivocal evidence of it is a selfish conduct, an indifference about the interests of vital godliness, and a greediness for preferment with a view to the honour, the power, and the emoluments annexed to the sacred offices. *Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter.*

reproved, did not consist in a want of foresight and skill to predict future events; but in a want of that spiritual discernment and understanding, which they might have obtained by instruction through the ordinary influence of the divine Spirit. This is evident from the very circumstance, that their ignorance was imputed to them as a grievous crime, an avoidable fault. Whereas, the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost, His extraordinary influence, did not at all depend on the will of man; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter i. 21.

The ignorance with which
Isaiah charged the Prophets, and
for which they were frequently

that despise my name ; and ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name ? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar ; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee ? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil ? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil ? Offer it now unto thy governor ; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person ? saith the LORD of hosts ? And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us : this hath been by your means : will he regard your persons ? saith the LORD of hosts. Who is there even among you, that would shut the doors for nought ? Neither do you kindle on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles : and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering : for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted ; and the fruit thereof, even HIS meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it ! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts : and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick ; thus ye brought an offering : should I accept this of your hands ? saith the LORD. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing, for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts ; and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen.

The

The literal sense of this passage is sufficiently obvious. But, can it be imagined that the subject of it extends no farther than to the external order of things in the Jewish Church? Was it the imperfect observance of the carnal ordinances of the Law, in setting a particular kind of bread upon the table in the sanctuary, and in the condition of victims offered in sacrifice, whether fat, or lean, or maimed, which provoked this tremendous denunciation against the Priests? Can this be imagined! Have we not here a prophecy of the blindness, stupidity, and obstinacy of the Jews, and particularly of their rulers and priests, in despising the bread of God, and rejecting the true Messiah? and, have we not, in this passage, a prophecy of the curse, which came upon the whole nation of Jews for their impenitency and unbelief? and, does not this passage prophetically declare the calling of the Gentiles and the pure worship of God in the Heathen nations? But further still: Can we not see, in this passage, by analogy at least; for, the same sin will appear in a thousand different forms, and the same reproof will meet it in every shape, and in every age of the Church—can we not see a reproof of the corruptions of Christianity in the eastern and western Churches, and in Protestant Churches too? Do we not hear a denunciation of the judgment of God against the lukewarm spirit, the selfish designs, and secularity of the ministers of religion in all ages; and, against the contempt which has been poured upon the authority of Revelation, by those who would build the sanctuary of God upon the uncertain foundation of natural religion,

and who have corrupted the doctrines of Revelation by their philosophism, and preach a mutilated gospel? *But, cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, the pure and perfect Lamb of God, and yet voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing;* or, who attempts to establish some other ground of hope than the witness which God hath given of his Son. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the Truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath ben evidently set forth, crucified among you?* The folly and the sin of rejecting the hope of Israel, of slighting and neglecting Him who is the hope of all the ends of the earth and the grand object of all the dispensations of Providence, are infinitely odious and full of the greatest guilt that intelligent beings are capable of contracting. *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received,* ~~avadeha εσω~~ *let him be accursed.*

And now, O ye Priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my Name—and, what is this, but suppressing or perverting the character of things as God revealed them, and setting a bad example before the eyes of the people, by which the glory of God hath been obscured, and the very profession of his truth rendered contemptible? If ye will not give glory to my Name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them

them already because ye lay it not to heart—O, most awful threatening! How dreadful the judgment, when our very blessings are cursed of God! *My covenant was with Levi of life and peace*, that is, the new covenant in Christ's blood, typified in the Levitical sacrifices; for, the Law in the *letter* is the old covenant, and the *letter killeth*; but the *spirit*, or spiritual meaning of the Law, which is the new covenant, *is life and peace*^t; and *I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my Name*:—They only, who have Levi's zeal for God, are fit to have a dispensation of the Gospel committed to their trust. *The Law of truth*, the evangelical truth, *was in his mouth*; he faithfully preached it; *and iniquity was not found in his lips*; he was not as many which corrupt the Word of God^u: *He walked with me in peace and equity*, corresponding with the merciful and holy design of my providence, and, as a worker-together with God^x, declared His peace and righteousness to men; *and did turn many away from iniquity*,—*For, the Priest's lips should keep knowledge*; the true spiritual knowledge of the Law, both in principle and practice, both by preaching and living; *and they should seek the Law, the meaning of it, at his mouth*: *for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts*, to declare His truth, His mind and will, to the people. *But, ye are departed out of the way*; ye neither teach it, nor walk in it; and, *ye have caused many to stumble at the Law*, taking away the key of knowledge, concealing its grand design and most important use; and even perverting God's truth,
prejudicing

^t Romans viii. 2, 6. ^u 2 Cor. ii. 17. ^x 1 Cor. iii. 9.

prejudicing the minds of the people against it, and causing them to stumble at the word^y; *ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts*, by incorporating the doctrines and commandments of men with the truths of Revelation, and making the Word of God of no effect by your traditions. *Therefore, have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the Law*; not declaring the whole truth; its prime, its full, and evangelical meaning.

All the dignity of ministers of the divine Word, all their importance, is reflected upon them from the glory of their master Christ. If they neglect Him; if they conceal or obscure *His* character, or do not set forth the glory of His salvation, their ministry will not appear of any great importance: for, let them insist, as much as they will, upon duties, moral and religious, without a direct reference to the great and important doctrines of salvation by Christ crucified, their lectures will be heard with indifference; because the people will always think they know already much more than they can practice. And, if ministers be more intent to promote their own secular interests than the honour of their Master, and the eternal happiness of men, the people will see their mean designs, and will despise them as mere trading priests.

^y See Luke xi. 52. Rom. ix. 31, 32, 33; and chap. x. 3, 4.
1 Peter ii. 7, 8.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

I HOPE my Reader will not think I have dwelt longer upon this subject than the nature of it requires. The discussion of it is of considerable importance to the principal design of this work, that is, to reveal the dispensations of Providence in the government of the Church: It is necessary to the right understanding of the holy Scriptures, and to shew the Unity of Design in the Old and New Testaments. I have further evidence to produce; and, I trust, clearer and stronger evidence, to prove that the types in the Old Testament were explained to the children of Israel, and were understood by them in their spiritual meaning.

The history of our Saviour may be composed out of the Old Testament prophecies, as well as from the writings of the four Evangelists in the New Testament. There is not one circumstance, or transaction, in our Saviour's life, of any special importance recorded in the New Testament History, which was not prophetically declared in the Old Testament Prophecies. Therefore, unless we suppose, what cannot well be imagined, that the Law of Moses contained one doctrine, and that the Prophets

Prophets of the Law preached another quite opposite, we must conclude that the Law, however obscure it may seem to us, was not so obscure to the Jews; and, that it was a revelation of the Saviour of the World, and so understood by the Jews who lived under that dispensation; for, otherwise, the Prophets taught unintelligible mysteries, and their prophecies were inconsistent with the dispensation under which they ministered.

In the Book of Psalms, and in the Prophets, we read many clear revelations of the dispensations of Providence; of the economy of grace; of the advent of Messiah; of its effects and consequences; of His incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom, and priesthood; of the effusion of the Spirit; of the apostacy and reprobation of the Jews; of the conversion of the nations; of the establishment, increase, and perpetuity of the Christian Church; of the end of the world, the general judgment, the condemnation of the wicked, and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King. These are the general contents of the Psalms and Prophets. And, the repentance and faith, the piety and obedience, of the Old-testament Saints, are described in perfect agreement with those important doctrines of Revelation: and, their trials and difficulties, their doubts and fears, their hopes and joys, described in the Psalms and Prophets, were exactly such as might be expected in people who have been taught these important doctrines. Now it cannot be supposed, that the Jews, in any time of the Old-testament dispensation, were without instruction in these most important articles of faith,

of

of which, in other times of the said dispensation, they were plainly informed by a succession of Prophets for many centuries: or, that, in some ages of the Jewish Church, there was nothing but total darkness; and that the Jews were left in invincible ignorance of doctrines, of the greatest importance to them, concerning which, in other ages, and under the same economy, they were well instructed. We must, therefore, conclude, that the Jews, and those who lived before them too, were informed of the spiritual and evangelical meaning of those actions which were shadows of good things to come. Indeed, the very evidence, that the Law had an evangelical meaning, and that Christ was the important design of the Mosaic dispensation, seems to contain in itself sufficient proof of this: for, is it not very unreasonable to suppose, that God would establish a Law, the principal design of which could not be understood, or which was never understood, until it was finally abrogated?

Let it be considered, what degree of light existed in the Jewish Church, at the time of our Saviour's birth; which is represented as a time of great degeneracy from the knowledge, faith, and practice of preceding ages. There was, at that time, a general expectation of the Meffiah. The Jews knew the very place of His birth; that He would be of the house and lineage of David; that He would be the Son of the Blessed, the Son of God; and, in some sense or other, equal with God His Father. They expected deliverance, and a glorious state of things under His government. And, though the far greater multitude of Jews

expected

expected the Messiah's kingdom would be of this world, there were others who had a perfect understanding of the spirituality of His government and kingdom, and, that the covenant with Abraham was a covenant of *mercy*, to *visit and redeem His people* from a state of ignorance and sin, that they might *serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness*. Even the woman of Samaria could say, *I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when He is come, He will tell us all things*; meaning whatever relates to the worship of God. Anna, and many others, looked for redemption in Ifrael from the promised Saviour; and, it is plain, they understood a spiritual redemption; for, they could not expect to enjoy the blessings and benefits of this redemption in the present world, because of the short time they had to continue here. Anna was extremely old; Simeon likewise, who waited for the consolation of Ifrael. And, if Simeon had looked for worldly prosperity through the Messiah, instead of a spiritual and eternal salvation, he would not have prayed to depart out of this world in peace, as soon as the Saviour was born: but, to live in it, that he might see and enjoy the glory of Messiah's reign.

The Pharisees and Lawyers had corrupted Revelation by their traditions, by sophistical interpretations of the Scriptures, by vain distinctions and superstitious glosses, which they put upon the sacred text. Yet, it is plain, throughout the New Testament, that they, and the Jews in general, understood many of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, which were the spiritual sense and meaning of the Law; particularly, the doctrine of a resurrection

resurrection from the dead. Indeed, all the twelve tribes, excepting only the small sect of philosophizing Sadducees, had an unshaken hope of a future resurrection; and, that it would be *a resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust*^z. This hope, was the principle of their obedience, such as it was.—When our Lord told the sister of Lazarus that her brother should rise again, she answered with the most perfect confidence, as a persuasion impressed upon her mind by early education, and as a general undoubted expectation, *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

Now, all this light of Revelation existed in the Jewish Church, before the preaching of the Apostles of our Saviour, and of John the Baptist. I ask, From whence was this light derived? If it be said, From the Prophets, I must take the liberty to add, From the Prophets *of the Law*; not as having received a new revelation to communicate to mankind, which is not once intimated in any of their prophecies, nor in any part of the Holy Scriptures, but, as interpreters and expositors of the Law of Moses. Moses, indeed, said nothing of a future state—no more than of the discovery of America: Indeed, he could not; because the dispensation, of which he was the delegated minister, was a figurative or typical one. Any open declaration of a future state, I must repeat it again, would have been perfectly inconsistent with the very nature of the Law. Yet, it is equally certain, a future state, and every thing relating to it, was the subject of that dispensation covertly.

^z Acts xxiv. 15. Chap. xxvi. 6, 7.

covertly. And, if it were not so, the Prophets, who were interpreters of the Law, could not have made it the subject of their prophesying ; nor could Christ have said, *Even Moses shewed you that the dead shall rise.* If then in that corrupt state of the Jewish Church, when the darkness of the moral night was more than usually dark, there shone through the gloom so many rays of heavenly light—if before the preaching of the Apostles, of our Saviour, and of John the Baptist, the doctrine of eternal redemption through the advent of Messiah was well understood ; and, if that capital point, that sum total of all Christian Truths, a resurrection from the dead, was so generally known ; we may safely say, The Jewish Church, in every age, had spiritual worshippers, who understood the evangelical sense and meaning of the Law. And, that the Jews in general might have known, and ought to have understood, this sense and meaning of the Law, is evident from the condemnation pronounced against them for their wilful blindness : *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me ; for he wrote of ME.*

There is an opinion, which I presume to call *The vulgar Error of Modern Christians* ; that the light of revelation was a mere twinkling twilight, when it first began to dawn upon this dark benighted world, and just served to preserve guilty Adam and his descendants, through many ages, from sinking into the deep abyss of utter despair ; that for two thousand years this light increased only in an imperceptible degree ; that, not till the time of the Patriarch Abraham, some few rays of this light began to be distinguished ; that,

that, about a thousand years after, in the time of Isaiah's prophecy, the darkness began to disperse; and, that the way of life was never perfectly known till seven or eight hundred years after Isaiah's prophecy, when the Gospel was preached by the Apostles of Jesus Christ, who brought life and immortality *to light*—that John the Baptist was no more than a morning star, the harbinger of day; that then the Sun of Righteousness arose, one degree above the horizon, and illumined a small corner of the earth; and, after a few years, the Apostles of Jesus Christ, as stars in every part of the firmament, reflected the heavenly light, beyond the bounds of the Roman empire, over all the earth.

This opinion, this vulgar error, it deserves no better name, has sprung^a from our careless manner of reading the Bible. We find, in the first part of the Bible, a figurative or typical dispensation ; which, from the very nature of it, must be extremely obscure without an interpreter. It is either by the force of prejudice in our education, or by recollection of a few sentences in the New Testament, that we are just able to perceive some indistinct intimations of evangelical truth in the enigmatical sayings and historical facts recorded in the Book of Genesis. In the Levitical institutions, these intimations become stronger. In the writings of the Prophets, particularly of the Prophet Isaiah, we find many lively expressions of

Has sprung, partly, perhaps, from an affection of philosophy, in accounting for the progress of human society, of knowledge, polite literature, the fine arts; and in the philosophical attempt to accommodate the doctrines of Religion to these curious speculations. The accommodation is necessary to give support and credit to these philosophical dreams in Christian countries, where only these dreams are told.

evangelical truth ; yet mixed with much obscurity. The darkness is only beginning to be diffipated ; and, the light of day scarcely dawns upon us, till we come to the Evangelists and Apostles of Jesus Christ. This progressive discovery of truth in the course of our own reading, and of our own experience, for we are not all at once illumined, we apply to the Church ; and imagine that the Church was four thousand years in learning the way of salvation ; in learning that it was the Son of God who should be manifested to destroy the works of the Devil ; and in learning, that through Him there will be a resurrection from the dead, and life everlasting.

The obscurity of the typical dispensation is no proof, and can be no proof, that the thing typified was not perfectly understood from the beginning, since we know that God himself appeared to instruct mankind, and since it is certainly true that there were Messengers of the LORD of Hosts to preach the word of Revelation, and to interpret the Law from the time of its first commencement. And, the same doctrines which are at this time necessary to form the moral character of men, in relation to a future state, have always been equally necessary, in every age ; for, human nature hath been, in every age, the same, and its wants the same.

The Church, though distinguished into the Jewish and Christian Churches, is but one body, actuated by one spirit, established in one and the same faith and hope, *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday under the Law, the same to-day under the Gospel, and the same for ever* ; the same way of life

life and salvation, revealed with the same clearness and fulnes of truth to Adam, Abraham, Moses and Isaia. And if the nations had not apostatized from the revelation of God, they would all, in every part of the world, from the beginning to the present day, equally possess the hope of eternal life in the revealed and promised Saviour of mankind. Without the preaching of the Apostles, indeed, they could not have known that the Saviour *is* come into the world, and *hath* actually accomplished our redemption in his death and resurrection : but, they would all know, even all nations, in every part of the world, would know the plan of God's merciful providence, in promising a Saviour to restore His fallen creatures from that state of sin and death into which they were plunged by the first transgression and disobedience—They would know this, without the preaching of the Apostles, or of any of their successors: and the same religion, which the Apostles taught the Gentiles, would, without their teaching, in every essential article, be even now found in every part of the habitable earth. And, lest this should seem to be affirmed presumptuously, I add, There are relics of the primitive revelation and religion still remaining in heathen nations. Opinions and customs which are evidently the corruptions of primitive truth and practice, are found in all parts of the world; and are a sufficient evidence, that all nations were once enlightened with the heavenly light ; just as the ruins of *Palmira* prove the existence of a magnificent city, in very remote ages, in what is now a desolate wilderness.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRADITIONS.

THE Jews acknowledge a two-fold Law. They say, When God delivered the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him also the true interpretation of it; and commanded him to commit the former to writing, but to impart the interpretation by word of mouth, to be preserved in memory, and to be transmitted down from generation to generation by tradition only. The former is therefore called *The written Law*; and, the latter, *Tradition, The Oral, or Unwritten, Law.*

They have never doubted of this fact: at least, it has been their constant persuasion since they returned from their first captivity; and, they do now as firmly believe that Moses received an unwritten Law, during the forty days in which he conversed with God in the holy mount, as that he received the written Law itself. They believe also that the unwritten Law is vastly superior to the written Law, and of infinitely greater importance; for, say they, The covenant was made with them, not upon the written, but, upon the oral, or unwritten Law, that is, according to the hidden

hidden meaning of the written Law, of which the oral, or unwritten, is the complete and perfect interpretation. And, lastly, they believe that Moses, when he came down from Sinai, faithfully delivered both these Laws, or these two parts of the Law, to the people.^b

There is more truth in these traditional opinions than many Christians are willing to acknowledge. St. Paul, in 2 Cor. iii. speaks of the Law as two-fold, or consisting of two parts; the text, or written Law, and its internal sense, or its typical meaning. The Law which was summarily written, or *engraven on tables of stone*, he calls *The Old Testament, The Flesh, and The Letter*: Its internal sense, or meaning, he calls *The New Testament, and The Spirit*; the former *written*, the latter *unwritten*. The text, or written Law, he compares to the human body, *The Flesh*; which, without the soul, is a lifeless mass of organized matter, or a dead body: and so, the Law, without the spirit, or its spiritual meaning, is dead also; it gives no life, no spiritual life, to them that observe it in the letter, but rather is *the ministration of death and condemnation*, leaving them under the guilt and power of sin. But, the spirit is life; and is communicated by living voices, by instruction of them that are spiritual, by the ministers of the New Testament, and is *written by the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart—He hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter,*

^b Or rather, that he delivered the traditional Law to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, the Elders

to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the great Synagogue.

but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. This is a plain declaration that the doctrine of the Apostles was the same as the doctrine of the Law *in the spirit*: and more plainly still, St. Paul told the Corinthians, that *the Lord*, meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, *is that spirit*.

When our Saviour was speaking to the Jews in the language of the Old Testament, and they could not understand Him, or understood Him literally, He told them, *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing*: the words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*. —He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, said the Apostle to the Romans, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, *in the spirit and not in the letter*; that is, the character of a Jew who is an Israelite indeed corresponds with the *spirit*, of the carnal Jew with the *letter*. And, in the same strain, he wrote to the Philippians, We are the circumcision, who worship God *in the spirit*, and *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, which explains what he meant by *worshipping God in the spirit*, and have no confidence in the flesh. In these passages^c, of St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Philippians, the *letter* and the *flesh* mean the written law and the external worship prescribed to the Jews; and the *spirit* means the unwritten Law, according to which the Christian character is formed; for, all true Christians *worship God in the spirit*, or *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, which is the very spirit and truth of

^c And in many other passages; 24. Rom. vii. 6. Rom. viii. 1, 4. see Matth. xxii. 43. John iv. 23, 1 John v. 6, 8.

of the external worship prescribed in *the letter of the Law*.

The Law is the *form* of truth^a; and, it was not possible that it should be any thing more than a *form*, a shadow, or resemblance, of spiritual things, of things invisible, and of things then future. The *spirit*, which is the truth itself, could not be expressed as the text, or letter, was; because the Law could not be at once typical and the thing typified, the form of truth and the very Truth itself. Yet, the things typified must have been known to the Jews; for, otherwise, the typical Law would not have been typical to them: to them it would have been a mere ceremonial Law without any meaning. And, by what means, can it be imagined that the Jews attained to this knowledge, unless we assent to that very ancient opinion, that Moses received a divine revelation of the truth contained in the Law, the archetype and original pattern shewed unto him in the holy mount^b; and unless we believe that he faithfully communicated this revelation to the conservators of Truth, the priests and prophets, at whose mouth the people might seek^c the true interpretation of their Law from generation to generation?

It could only be by means of this instruction in the knowledge of the truth, that *the Law was a Schoolmaster to the Jews unto Christ*; for, the Law speaks nothing openly concerning them: no; not a word. And, what sort of a schoolmaster is that, which does not speak, or cannot be understood, and from whom the scholars receive no part of

the instruction which the master was appointed to teach them? It is expressly said that Moses wrote of Christ; which is not true in the letter; nor can it be true in any other way than as the letter was a type of Christ, or of Christ as its internal sense and meaning. And, is not this the very thing which St. Paul asserted, when, speaking of the *spirit* in contradistinction to the *letter*, he said, *Now the Lord is that spirit?* and when, in another Epistle, he said, *Christ is the end of the Law*, its main design and the very perfection of it? If the Jews did not understand this, they had means without the end, and without knowing the end, and without possibility of attaining the end for which the means had been appointed. And, who can believe such a manifest absurdity?

But, nothing can be more reasonable, and, as I think, more scriptural, than the opinion of the Jews, that, besides the written Law, there was another Law communicated first to Abraham, and afterwards to Moses, and delivered down from him by tradition to succeeding generations; a Law which is of infinitely greater importance than the *letter*; a Law which is the substance of a better covenant than that which comprehended the political interests of a single nation, and which God promised to write upon the heart as the consummation of his eternal mercy. This Law, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, written in the heart, is as much more excellent than the *letter*, as heaven is higher than the earth, as the heavenly paradise excels the earthly Canaan, and as the spiritual and eternal life with Christ in heaven is better

better than the temporal and political felicity of the Jewish nation.

Very unfortunately, the opinion of the Jews, concerning the written and unwritten Law, has not been so well expressed as to be perfectly free from objection, and has been connected with other opinions on the same subject which are vain, trifling, superstitious, and very injurious both to the written and unwritten Law. In consequence of these errors, the whole has been condemned as a mere fiction, without the least foundation in the Scriptures, or in any authentic history. This is generally the fate of truth, when it has been incorporated with vile superstitions.

But, the probability of argument lies on the other side; namely, that there was from the beginning a true tradition of very great importance, which gave occasion to the introduction of those vain, trifling, and superstitious opinions. For, whether we reason on the nature of man, on the propensities and experience of mankind in general, or on the known character of the Jews in particular, which has been much the same in all ages, we cannot easily account for the introduction of the false traditions, without supposing that the Law had a spiritual or mystical sense, communicated to the fathers of the Jewish nation: that is, the idea of an unwritten Law did not spring from the spurious traditions, but these traditions from the abuse of this certain truth, that the written Law has a spiritual, or typical, design concealed under the *letter*.

All the various errors in doctrine, the false opinions, the superstitious and enthusiastic notions,

which

which have debased the Christian character, are *corruptions* of the genuine doctrines of Christianity: They are the perversions of truth; or human opinions introduced under the covering of divine truths, like base metals plated over with thinnest laminæ of sterling silver. For example: if there had not been a true doctrine of predestination in the holy Scriptures, it would not have been possible to introduce into the Church the Stoical doctrine of necessity and fatalism. All the false doctrines of Trinitarians, Arians, Socinians, and of Deists too, of Pelagians and Arminians, of Calvinists and Antinomians, of Mystics and Quakers, have some truth in them: they are divine truths perverted, or superinduced as a covering to some philosophical errors, without which these errors could never have been entertained by Christians.

Before the first captivity, when the Jews were transported to Babylon, they had generally lost the true sense and meaning of the Law; and, as the natural effect of this ignorance, they had fallen into the practice of vile superstitions, idolatries, and gross immoralities. Their captivity was the punishment of this apostacy—I said, *generally*; for, the true sense and spiritual meaning of the Law was never totally lost. Even when our Saviour came into the world, which was a time of general apostacy, there were some spiritual worshippers, waiting for the consolation of Israel; which could not have been without the true knowledge of the Law in the spirit. But, not long after the return from Babylon, the Jews fell away, like as their forefathers had done, and substituted

stituted at last their own vain conceits instead of that spiritual sense and meaning of the Law which is its more important and grand design.

The Jews suppose that Ezra, Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and others with them, collected from the old people, who had lived before the captivity, the ancient doctrines and usages of their forefathers; as well as they could be recovered from the memories of the old people. But, considering the very corrupt state of the Church preceding the captivity, and the very unsettled and confused state of the nation, and how young these ancients must have been at that time, it cannot be imagined that much of the true tradition could be recovered from their memories. This however is certain, that, not long after the death of Ezra, Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and the prophet Malachi, whom the Jews imagine to have been the same with Ezra, there sprung up a set of men, mystical, or rather, fanciful interpreters of the Law, whose professed design was to preserve the ancient tradition, the doctrines and usages of their forefathers, and to draw inferences and consequences from them. This practice was imitated by their successors, till the novel opinions of these interpreters overwhelmed the true tradition, and succeeded in its place. These *opinions* were afterwards called *The Tradition of the Elders*: and, it was this spurious Tradition, which, in many instances, perverted the literal sense of the Law; and, in many instances, made it of none effect, even in regard to external practice.

We find an instance of this in the fifteenth chapter of St. Matthew. The Scribes and Pharisees

sees asked our Saviour, Why do thy disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders? meaning by *Tradition* those *opinions* before mentioned—Why do they transgress the Tradition of the Elders; *for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?* The Tradition did not require the washing of hands out of any regard to cleanliness; for, it was required, though the hands were as clean as delicacy itself could make them. But, they placed religion in this washing before meals: they burdened the conscience with this idle ceremony: they substituted this external cleanliness for inward purity of the heart. And, our Lord, not only condemned this superstition, but all their traditions in general, as invalidating the divine Law. He answered and said unto them, *Why do you also transgres the commandment of God by your Tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.*

Honouring includes maintenance, nourishment, and consolation, as well as respectful behaviour and submission to authority. God commanded, that children should contribute to the happiness of their parents, and support that life from which the children derived their own, and by which they themselves were supported in their helpless infancy. The commandment requires returns of gratitude for all the parents care, and love, and expense; and, that children chearfully requite their parents by helping them in time of need, by maintaining them whenever misfortune, sickness, or old age, demand this return of duty; and God enjoined the magistrate, that, if any one be so ungrateful,

grateful, so undutiful to his parents, as to suffer them to languish in poverty, or perish, when he could help them, that this unnatural child, thus cursing father or mother, and pouring contempt upon the commandment of God, the Legislator and King of Israel, should be put to death.

But the Tradition so far explained away this commandment, as to make it of no force. It taught children to evade the authority of the divine precept. *Ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free from all obligation to relieve his parents in their necessity, and free from the punishment which the Law denounced.* The meaning is this: when parents fall to decay, and want relief, a son may excuse himself, by saying, I have consecrated to religious purposes, as an offering to God, all the overplus of my estate, or of my gettings, every thing beyond what is necessary to my own maintenance; and therefore I cannot help you; for, it would be sacrilege and perjury, if I were to give you what I have solemnly vowed and devoted to God^g.

Thus they made void the law of God by their tradition, and taught people to sin upon principle; that is, to transgress the commandment of God, through pretence of honouring Him above their natural

^g The sovereign Lord and Proprietor of all things in heaven and earth had already disposed of the overplus of the man's estate, and had appropriated it, by commandment, to the relief of his parents: He had appointed the way in

which it should be consecrated to Himself. The man therefore had no right to make the vow, and the oath *corban* was a piece of arrogant presumption, and was void ab initio.

natural parents. It is true we owe more to God than to our natural relations, and ought to prefer Him above all considerations in the world. But, the Jews should have considered that the best way of honouring God, and promoting the interests of religion, is by keeping God's commandments.

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs. But, alas ! the veil was upon their hearts, and their eyes were blinded: they had substituted certain vain distinctions and refinements, which carried a shew of religion and zeal for God, in place of that spiritual worship, that conformity to the will and design of God typified in the letter of their Law; and under a shew and pretence of piety, *they draw near to God in profession, while their unconverted hearts were far from Him.*

Our Saviour therefore taught His disciples and the multitude, that no one is rendered unclean, or the less acceptable to God, by what enters into him through the mouth; but by the wickedness of his heart, by wicked tempers, by wicked words and actions: *not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man; for example, eating with unwashen hands; but, that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

After our Saviour had said this, He retired from them; and the disciples came, and told Him that He had given great offence to the Pharisees; and He answered, *Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up;* meaning, that those traditions, for which the Pharisees were so exceedingly zealous, were not of God, and must yield to the more important

important doctrines of Revelation. But, our Lord's answer was more extensive in its import, as a maxim universally true, in regard to all doctrines and opinions of men, all human inventions and observances, by which true religion has been obscured or perverted: They must all, sooner or later, as noxious weeds, be rooted up. People may be offended, when their prejudices are exposed; but, it is necessary to expose them, that the pure doctrines of Revelation may be received.

It proceeds from the pride and selfishness of human nature, that men are far more zealous for their own opinions, than for God's truth; for their own as their own, than for God's truth as His. And, when they fancy, that their own opinions are the very doctrines of Revelation, their zeal then becomes excessive, and they are utterly impatient of contradiction, merely because this fancy increases their idea of the importance of their own opinions. And, he needs to be fenced with impenetrable armour, or to be endued with invincible fortitude and patience, who shall dare to oppose religious prejudices.

Christendom has long been divided into a multitude of sects and parties. That, which each of them calls *The Gospel*, is disbelieved by the rest. They have cast the doctrines of Christianity in moulds of their own making, of various forms and sizes; and, every one thinks his own to be the very model, the measure and standard of truth. For the most part, that, for which they are all contending; that, for which they are so exceedingly zealous; is, not the portion of truth which they have laid hold of and adopted into their several

several systems; but, the shape which they have given to it, that is, for their own opinions about it.

And endless variety of religious opinions are held here in England; and, all pretend that their opinions are derived from the Scriptures, or from reason. But, this is impossible: Neither the Scriptures, nor reason, will justify contradictory opinions. The far greater number of them, therefore, can have no more foundation in truth, than the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees: *They are plants, which my heavenly Father hath not planted.*

Every man, said Luther, *has a Pope in his own breast*: Every one almost pretends to infallibility; or, if he seem not to pretend to it; if he allow that he may err in some points; he is so sure he is right in the greater number, and in those especially which he deems essential, that he preaches and disputes, and marches forward, with the confident boldness of an infallible guide. The Scribes and Pharisees were most positive, where they had the least reason for confidence. It would be well, if Christians carefully avoided this error. At all times, humility, diffidence, and candour, become such imperfect creatures as we are; and especially in the present state of things, when Christianity is so variously represented. Professors should be more modest, less positive, less dogmatical.

Our own opinions are no better than either useless, or noxious, weeds. They may be modifications of Truth; but, are not that Truth: They add no value to it; and may, perhaps, turn it into poison. The opinion of Hymeneus and Philetus was

was merely a modification of the most important doctrine of the resurrection: but, it was a most pernicious opinion; *and their word did eat as doth a canker.* The same may be said of the opinions of those Judaizing Christians, who corrupted the Gospel in the regions of Galatia. And, the same may be said of many opinions in the present day. But, the time is coming, when *every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* And, at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, all *our* thoughts, all *our own* opinions, shall perish: They will give no advantage to us, to secure our salvation, or to engage the approbation of heaven.

In the midst of so many jarring opinions, they seem to act the wisest part, who, having a glimmering portion of the heavenly light, sufficient to sanctify them, are more concerned to have their hearts filled with grace, than to have their heads stuffed with opinions; and, who hear sermons, and read the Bible, for no other purpose than to hold communion with God, and to grow in an inward, heartfelt experience of His grace and love, and into a more perfect conformity to His will in all things.

And there is the more evident, and the more urgent necessity, to attend to this, because what is said of doctrines, as human opinions, is equally true of persons and practices; *Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* Sincere Christians are the planting of Jehovah: His own right hand hath planted them in His Church. It was *He that made and formed thee, O Israel;* that enlightened thy mind;

that sanctified thy heart ; that regenerated and made thee a new creature in Christ Jesus ; and, *those who are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God : they shall bring forth fruit in old age : they shall be fat and flourishing.* All others, are *the tares*, which *the enemy sowed : they are hypocrites, mere professors ; sensual, having not the Spirit.* And, the time will come, when all, whom God hath not planted in the Church, will be rooted up. Many great professors will then be put to shame, and be excommunicated for ever. No one will then be owned, as a plant of the Lord's planting, who hath not been sealed with the holy Spirit of promise ; for, the work of the Spirit, in the real sanctification of our hearts and lives, is the only sure earnest of our title to the eternal inheritance.

In vain will they say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done wonderful works ; for, if their works be such as God hath not commanded, or if their prophesying be the profession or preaching of their own opinions, they will not receive the reward of righteousness. In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

The Pharisees were exact in their opinions, according to the received standard of orthodoxy, and they were exceedingly rigid in their practice, observing the traditions of the Elders. But, their opinions were not faith in God's word, nor their practice obedience to His commands. They believed, indeed, but it was believing a false report, and not the revelation of God. They

They required of others, and imposed upon themselves, what God had not commanded, and made those things to be sins which God had not forbidden.

There is too much of this in the present day. I dare not be more particular. But, let every one, who professes the Christian religion, beware of this error ; lest he found a Pharisee at last, a mere zealot for opinions, a whitened sepulchre, righteous in his own eyes, righteous, perhaps, in the sight of men, but certainly an abomination in the sight of God.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves. And, because the heart is deceitful above all things ; because every man's way is right in his own eyes, even when he deviates most from the way of truth, so that men often think they are doing God service when they live in open rebellion against His will, when they persecute His truth, and slay the ministers of mercy ; and, because they often fancy that they are doing justly and loving mercy and walking humbly with God, even while they are acting altogether inconsistently with the truth of things, offending against the interests of human nature by setting the most pernicious example ; while they are void of charity, and hard-hearted towards their fellow creatures, and pay no regard to the mercy of God ; while they are self-sufficient, and, instead of walking humbly with God, are living without God in the world, without any serious piety at all ; and lastly, because many think they believe and preach the Gospel, who have no degree of the evangelical spirit, and are only preaching their own opinions

about that Gospel; THEREFORE let us turn to the heart-searching God, and pray that He will search and try the ground of our hearts; and, if He see any way of wickedness in us lurking under a specious profession of truth and righteousness, that He will undeceive us, and lead us in the way everlasting.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE METHOD OF STUDYING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

W^HOEVER would form a judgment of any large building, comprehending a variety of different apartments and offices uniting in one grand design, must survey the whole. He must study the general character of the building, and the particular style, or order of its architecture. He must examine the materials of which it is formed. He must compare the superstructure with the foundation ; and notice the several parts of the building distinctly, and in relation to each other. He must consider the ground upon which it stands, the nature of the country in which it is placed, and the condition of the people who are to inhabit it : Otherwise, he cannot discern that grand effect, which comprehends the design, the proportion, the strength, the beauty, and use.

We must pay due regard to the *whole* Bible. It is a perfect Whole, though composed of various parts : and, these parts have a reciprocal relation to each other. It will not be sufficient, to answer our purpose, in forming a judgment of this wonderful composition, if we examine the New Testa-

ment and compare it with itself, that is, one part of the New Testament with another; because the New Testament stands upon the foundation of the Old, and has relation to it in every one of its parts. Nor is it sufficient, if we examine the Prophets by themselves. They were Prophets of the Law: They were ministers under the legal dispensation. They must therefore be regarded in that relation, viz. as Prophets of the Law. And, as they did not minister the things which were spoken, to the people under the Law, or to them merely, but, to those who should live under the New-testament dispensation; therefore, the prophetical writings of the Old Testament are to be examined, both in their relation to the Law of Moses and to the writings of the Apostles of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

In regard to the Law, which I would call The Foundation of this spiritual edifice, it is not sufficient, if we examine this by itself. It is scarcely possible to discover the design of an architect, by looking at the stones which are just laid for a foundation. We have already seen, in former chapters, that the Law was a typical dispensation; and, the very nature of a typical dispensation points out the necessity of an interpreter. The Prophets, comprehending the Priests and Levites in this term, were appointed by God to interpret the Law to the people of Israel; and, we must, of necessity, have recourse to their writings, and to the writings of the Prophets of the New Testament, as our interpreters and guides, to lift up the veil of Moses and discover to us the glory of his countenance; that is, we must study the Bible as one

one perfect *Whole*. But, there is something wanted yet—We must examine the materials, and the several styles of architecture of which this building is composed. We must consider the ground, the situation of this building, and the condition of its inhabitants; that is, we must study the language, the manner of speaking, the words and phraseology of the Bible; and the various methods of instruction which it offers to us: we must reflect on the condition of human nature, what it was and is; and must examine the sacred writings in the whole, and in all their parts, in relation to the world in general, and to ourselves, and to the whole possible extent of our existence. We may then see the design of the great Architect, the wonderful design of God's merciful providence, the truth and consistency of the doctrines of Revelation, the proportion, the strength, the beauty, and use, the importance and advantage of this wonderful composition.

In order to this, I would recommend to every one to read the Bible regularly through from beginning to end, just as he would read any other book; and to repeat this course of reading as frequently as possible. Let him treasure up in his memory the general contents of the Bible, so that he may be able to take a comprehensive view of the whole, and to examine the several parts in relation to each other. Those passages, which, by themselves, are quite obscure, must not be lightly passed over; because, however obscure they may be separately, they will probably appear very luminous, when the reader's mind is stored with the general contents of these sacred writings. This is

particularly the case, with respect to many passages in the prophetical compositions, the meaning of which cannot be readily discerned, until we are well acquainted with the historical detail of facts to which these passages relate. And, in the New Testament, the Epistle to the Galatians affords an example of the necessity of attending to the historical part of the Scriptures. The true interpretation of this Epistle depends chiefly upon the facts recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. And, it seems to have happened through inattention to this chapter, that interpreters have frequently overlooked the simple design of this Epistle, and have given to it a mystical meaning, which, probably, never entered the head of St. Paul in writing it.

Concordances and marginal references may, in some degree, supply the want of diligent reading. But, a familiar acquaintance with the general contents of the Bible, in all its parts, will be far more advantageous. At the least, a familiar acquaintance with the general contents of the Bible is necessary, before we can avail ourselves sufficiently of these assistances.

It will be a great advantage to any one, in studying the Scriptures, if he discern the principal object intended in them from the beginning to the end of the Bible. This is plainly declared to be Christ; and, through Him, the recovery of man from that state of sin and death into which he is fallen through the first transgression and disobedience; and, the recovery of Jews and Gentiles, all mankind, from that state of wickedness, that guilt and hopeless misery, into which the whole human

human race have fallen by their own apostacy and wilful disobedience. “ The precious hope of “ a Redeemer was the support of fallen man ; the “ theme of all the Patriarchs : the boast and ex- “ ultation of all the Prophets ; and the desire of “ all nations—Salvation by the blood of Christ “ was the eternal purpose of God, the ultimate “ end of all His counsels”^b—Moses wrote of *Him*^c. He is the end of the Law for righteousness for every one that believeth^d. And, to Him all the Prophets bear witness, that through *His* name, whosoever believeth in *Him* shall receive remission of sins^e. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy^f. The Law was a kind of schoolmaster to the Jews^g, to declare to them the office of Christ, our great High Priest, and the nature of that salvation which may be obtained through Him that was to come. Moses and the Prophets foretold that Christ should suffer for sin, that He should rise from the dead as the first fruit of a general harvest, and should shew light to the people Israel, and to the Gentiles^h. This knowledge of the great object of the holy Scriptures, will direct our minds in searching them. We shall expect to find our Saviour in them, and shall discover Him with the greater readiness. Even the remotest circumstances will be apprehended in their tendency towards this central point.

In the Epistles to the Hebrews, to the Galatians, to the Romans, and in other parts of the New Testament, there are plain expositions of several

remarkable

^b *Bishop Hurd.* ^c John v. 46. ^d Rom. x. 4. ^e Acts x. 43.

^f Rev. xix. 10. ^g Gal. iii. 24. ^h Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

remarkable incidents in the Old-testament History, and of many particulars in the typical Law. We must pay careful attention to these expositions. They not only explain the passages to which they are immediately related, but will be a key to other passages, and enable us to read of our Saviour in the History and Law of Moses, as well as in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles.

The Law prescribed divers ablutions, washings, purifications, sacrifices of lambs, goats, and other animals, attended with many minute circumstances in the performance of these rites. What can any one make of these, if he read no further? How will he justify the wisdom of God in these institutions? Can we imagine that God, who is a spirit, hath commanded a solemn farce to be acted, a mere ceremonial religion? And, it must be confessed, these ordinances of the Law, considered in themselves, were no better: considered in themselves, they were *weak and beggarly elements*, in the contemptuous sense which is usually annexed to these terms. Yet, we shall find, that these *weak and beggarly elements* were elements of learning, forms of truth and knowledge, teachers of the highest wisdom and the purest religion.

In the Old Testament, in the Law itself, and in the Prophets, we read plain intimations that these ordinances were not instituted for their own sake, as having any intrinsic worth in them; and, that they were far from being acceptable to God upon their own account. They were reprobated, whenever the mind of those who were engaged in these services, was not directed to the end of these institutions. *To what purpose is the multitude of your*

your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord: I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new-moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them^p. And the Prophets, not only declared the vanity, the inefficacy of the works of the Law, and of the legal sacrifices; they foretold also, that Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself^q; that He should be cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of His people; that He should make His soul an offering for sin; that He should bear the sin of many, and make reconciliation for transgressors^r; that is, that Messiah should accomplish, by the one offering of Himself, that which the voice of the Prophets, and the repeated sacrifices of the Law, by the very circumstance of repetition, declared could not be accomplished by these institutions. This surely was applying the Law to the expected Saviour. The expressions *cut off*, as a substitute for others, *for the transgression of the people, bearing the sin of many, bearing their iniquity, making an offering for sin, and reconciliation for transgressors*, declared that the propitiatory sacrifices of the Law were intended to prefigure the one great sacrifice of Messiah, and would have their completion in the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world.

Probably,

^p Isaiah i.

^q Daniel ix. 26.

^r Isaiah liii.

Probably, the Prophets were more explicit in their sermons to the Jews, in declaring the design of the Levitical institutions and their reference to the Messiah, than they seem to have been in their poetical compositions; and probably, these compositions were better understood by the Jews than by us at this time. However, we have no reason to regret the want of a more explicit declaration of this great subject in the prophetical writings, since the Apostles of Jesus Christ supply this deficiency. For, as soon as we have recourse to the Apostles, we are clearly informed of the design of the legal institutions; that they were scenical exhibitions of the doctrines of Revelation; that the Law was a shadow of things to come; and particularly, that the sacrifices of the Law were designed to represent, sacramentally, the one great sacrifice which the Son of God should offer, to take away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of Himself.

My design, in these remarks, is to shew the advantage of comparing scripture with scripture, the Law with the Prophets, and both with the Apostles, in their writings. I will now offer to my Reader another example in the historical part of the books of Moses.

In *Genesis xxxii. 24.* we read, *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day.* Jacob said, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* And he said, *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel;* for, *as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed.* And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place

PENIEL,

PENIEL, *i. e.* The Face of God; *for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* Though there be much obscurity in the mysterious transaction which this history records, we plainly discern that the person who wrestled with Jacob in the human form was a divine person, even the Lord Himself; and we see in this history a plain intimation that Jacob understood by the event of his wrestling, that God was and would be engaged, as his sworn friend and ally, to preserve his life from the designs of his brother Esau, to deliver him out of all his trouble, and be an everlasting blessing and life to him. But, the mystery is opened and explained in other passages of the sacred writings.* In the margin of the text Genesis xxxii. 26. we are directed to Hosea xiii. 4. *He, Jacob, by his strength had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. Even THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS, JEHOVAH is His memorial.* This explains the mystery of Jacob's struggle, or wrestling; that it was a vision, expressing the success of Jacob's prayer of faith, when he intreated for divine protection against the hostile designs of his brother Esau, who was at this time marching against Jacob with an armed force. The very words of his prayer are recorded: *O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, JEHOVAH, which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for, with my staff (a single*

single and forlorn fugitive) *I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for, I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.* And, *Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.* And further, this passage in the prophesy of Hosea, plainly distinguishes the object of Jacob's faith, that it was THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS, JEHOVAH in the human form, *God manifest in the flesh*^{*}—and, this is more plainly declared, by the reference it contains to the vision in Bethel, when Jacob fled from his brother Esau—*He found HIM in Bethel, and there HE spake with us, even THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS, JEHOVAH* is HIS memorial—For, at Bethel, Jacob *dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* And, behold, JEHOVAH stood above it, and said *I am JEHOVAH ALEIM, God, of Abraham thy father, and ALEIM, the God of Isaac, &c.* In this vision, the ladder expressed the one Mediator between God and men, *the man Christ Jesus*^t. The angels were the representatives, or visible appearances, of the divine persons, the ALEIM; and the Shekinah appearing above, at the top of the ladder, was JEHOVAH communicating His eternal purpose of mercy, and executing that purpose by the offices of the ALEIM through the Mediator. Our Lord

^s 1 Tim. iii. 16.

^t 1 Tim. ii. 5.

Lord justified this interpretation, in what He said to Nathaniel, John i. 51. *You shall see*, namely, the vision of Jacob realized in me—*You shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending*—not upon a ladder, but on Him that was represented by it—*upon the Son of Man.*

The history of Nathaniel, in the New Testament, reflects yet greater degree of light upon this part of the history of Jacob, and derives light from it. Nathaniel, as Jacob, was *left alone*^{*}: He had been in some retired place, remote from the eye of all human observation. Probably, under the pressure of some grievous trial of his faith, he had been pouring forth his soul in secret prayers. He knew that God alone was witness to what had passed in this place of his retirement. Presently after this, Philip met with him, and conducted him to Jesus. *When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him, He saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile—Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* This declaration of omnipresence and omniscience immediately convinced Nathaniel: Calling him by the name of *Israel*, expressing the internal state of his soul, describing his most secret actions, pointing to the very place, and to the very spot, the tree—this was telling Nathaniel that, like his father Jacob, he had been wrestling and had prevailed; and, it was telling him, and giving proof of it too, that He himself was the very person, before whom both Jacob and Nathaniel had wept and made supplication. After this declaration of things,

* Gen. xxxii. 24.

things, to which God and the conscience of Nathaniel alone were privy, there could be no room in the breast of this upright man to harbour a doubt concerning the true character of Jesus of Nazareth: he therefore immediately confessed his divine Saviour, *Rabbi, Thou art The Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.*

The Bible has a language, or manner of speaking, peculiar to itself. We must learn this language, or manner of speaking, by comparing Scripture with Scripture.—There are many terms in the New Testament, which, it is quite necessary, we should understand: such as Covenant, Redemption, Propitiation, Sacrifice, Atonement, Purify, Law and Gospel, Letter and Spirit, Works and Faith, Debt and Grace*. These words cannot be explained by Lexicons and Dictionaries, that is, by the use of the same terms in profane authors; because profane authors never use them in the same sense in which they are used in the sacred books. And, it will be nearly as unprofitable, perhaps much more dangerous, to submit to the definitions of Christian writers; I mean, of systematical authors; who explain these terms so as may best agree with the systems which they have invented or adopted. Whenever we meet with any of these terms in the New Testament, we should recur to the Old Testament, from whence these terms are borrowed. For, the New Testament generally expresses things in reference to

* Some of these terms are used in different sensess; particularly *Law* and *Faith*. If this be not attended to, it will produce confusion of ideas in reading the Scriptures; and, we shall often mistake the meaning of the sacred Writers.

the legal dispensation ; and, therefore, must be explained by recourse to the Law and the Prophets.

The New Testament bears the same relation to the Law, which the superstructure of any building has to the foundation upon which it stands : and, it is not possible to understand the New Testament without the Old. It will not be found sufficient, if we compare one part of the New Testament with another part of the same book ; because the New Testament is not a distinct revelation : it is not a new revelation : it is no revelation by itself. We might as well call the attic story of a building an house by itself ; and might as well think to form a perfect judgement of any building by examining the relative parts of the attic story ; or, by surveying a wing lately added to some ancient structure. We can only guess at the meaning of the New Testament, if we read it by itself, without the Law and the Prophets. In this case we must either take upon trust the comments we find in any systematical books of divinity, or pin our faith upon other men's sleeves : Or, if we refuse this, and would examine for ourselves ; the only means we have, to understand the New Testament, when we reject the Law and the Prophets, are in the use of Lexicons and Dictionaries, profane authors, the rules of vulgar criticism, and the maxims and prejudices of education ; that is, we are obliged to use an uncertain rule to explain and judge what is also uncertain. And as these means and principles are infinitely various, hence it is that the New Testament appears to one person to contain a very contrary

s doctrine

doctrine and way of salvation to what another apprehends. Hence the multitude of sects in Christendom; and hence the confident orthodoxy of every one of them. A Socinian is as confident that the New Testament favours his opinions, as ever any Trinitarian can be.

The Heathen offered sacrifices to their Gods. They knew very little more of this practice than that their forefathers did so before them. Some confused apprehension they had, that, some way or other, these sacrifices appeased the incensed Gods, and rendered them propitious. But, they had no apprehension of the nature of a proper sacrifice, nor any precise idea of the nature and efficacy of their own sacrifices. Therefore, the mystery of Christ's death; the purpose, the reason, the nature, and efficacy of His sacrifice of Himself, can never be explained by any thing in heathen authors. And, it may be questioned, whether any one can understand the mystery of Christ's death, as a sacrifice for sin, by reading the New Testament only. This is no derogation from the importance and sufficiency of the New Testament; because, it was never intended to be a revelation by itself⁷. It only discovers the Advent of Christ, that He is come; and, that the Law hath its actual completion in Him. Therefore, without understanding the design of the Law, and the history of prior dispensations revealed in the Old Testament;

⁷ It is confessed, there are many who have never studied, and never read, the Old Testament, who yet understand the New, so far as to be wise unto salvation: but, this is owing more to the influence of traditional light, than to the absolute sufficiency of the New Testament; i. e. to the influence of a light derived from those who have studied Moses and the Prophets.

ment^z; and, without recourse to what is written of the typical sacrifices; the New Testament cannot be explained, where it speaks of the sacrifice of Christ. And, it seems impossible, that a Socinian, who rejects the Old Testament; or, which is the same thing, receives it only in the letter, and nearly in the same sense in which it is understood by the modern apostate Jews, should ever be convinced by any testimonies from the writings of the Apostles. He applies to them the maxims and prejudices of his education, or the principles of a false philosophy, which to him are of prior authority, and more certainty than the word of God itself. It appears to his prejudiced mind, that sacrifices are of the nature of presents to the Deity; and, that the sacrifice of Christ, and redemption in his blood, are merely figurative, or metaphorical, expressions, to shew that God will be reconciled to us on our sincere amendment.

s 2

This

^z It may be objected that the Apostles, in the New Testament, argue from the writings of Moses, and the Prophets; and, not only refer to their writings, but quote and explain them; and therefore it is not necessary to study the Old Testament in order to understand the New, unless upon supposition that the fidelity, the wisdom and inspiration of the Apostles cannot be depended upon. But, the Apostles sometimes refer to the Old Testament, by mere hints and allusions to what was written by Moses and the Prophets. And in general, they take many things for granted; for example, that their readers acknow-

ledge the authority of the Old Testament, and regard it as their Bible, the standard and umpire of truth; that their readers are well acquainted with what is written in the Law and the Prophets; that they know the connection of the passages briefly quoted in the New Testament, and understand the terms borrowed from the Law of Moses; and, that their readers will apply to the Old-testament Scriptures for further information, and to satisfy themselves of the truth and authority of all their arguments, their assertions, their counsels and commands.

This is the best guess he can make; and, he can do no more than guess at the meaning of the New Testament without the Old.

There is not any thing expressed more decisively, by the writers of the New Testament, than this, that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. *Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* Heb. ix. 26. *Christ hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.* Ephes. v. 2. *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* Heb. ix. 28. *He is the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John ii. 2. *After He had offered one sacrifice for sin, He for ever sat down at the right hand of God.* Heb. x. 12. *By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* ver. 14. *An high Priest is taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.* Heb. v. 1. *Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* Heb. ii. 17. And, *Such an High-Priest became us, who needeth not daily, to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people—for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.* chap. vii. 27. *By His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us.* Heb. ix. 12. *In whom we have Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* Ephes. i. 7. and Col. i. 14. *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.* 1 Cor. v. 7. *Behold The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* John i. 29. However plainly these Scriptures may seem to express the nature and efficacy

cacy of the sacrifice which Christ offered, in the opinion of those who have been initiated into the mystery of our redemption, and who have been habituated to consider them as plain testimonies of the truth which they have received; yet, they are far from being so plain as not to want further illustration. Whenever the meaning of these Scriptures is doubted, or disputed; whenever we wish to inform the ignorant and unlearned, or unbelievers; and whenever we wish to strengthen our own faith in the doctrine contained in them; we must inquire after the meaning of the terms in these Scriptures: we must prove that this, or that, is the sense in which they were used by the Apostles; and we have no other medium by which we can come to this conclusion, but the original revelation contained in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, we learn that *sacrificing* signified devoting any thing to death and the actual putting it to death: And, an offering for sin, or a sacrifice for sin, implied, not only that the curse of sin lay upon the victim set apart to be sacrificed, but also that it actually suffered death judicially for the person, or persons, by whom the sin had been committed.

Whoever confirmed not all the words of the Law to do them, which confirmation was expressed by circumcision, or by the baptism of female Jews, and of Gentile Proselytes, and by submitting to walk in the commandments of the Lord, as time and place and other circumstances permitted, was devoted to death without remedy. The Law provided no remedy for any one of this description; because refusing to confirm all the

words of the Law was a consummation of impiety. It was a wilful rejection of the authority of the Law, and of the Law-giver, and of the grace and blessing and privileges which the Law held forth to those, and to those only, who willingly and submissively assented to this peculiar dispensation. But, for those who ratified and confirmed the oath and covenant of Jehovah, and yet were guilty or polluted in various instances, through force of violent temptations, through ignorance and infirmity, a remedy was prescribed. Victims were substituted to bear *their* iniquity, to be put to death and consumed in *their stead*, or for them. The guilty persons laid their hands upon the head of the victim, confessing their sins; and then, the victim, whatever it was, suffered for them, the clean for the unclean, the innocent for the guilty. In consequence, and as the effect of this, the polluted were said to be cleansed; the guilty were freed from the curse of sin, or from suffering for it in their own persons, and were received again into the congregation, and restored to the free enjoyment of all the privileges of faithful Israelites. The sins which they had committed were forgiven: Atonement was said to have been made for them: and, they now stood in the same predicament, in consequence of the sacrifice, as if they had never sinned; free from the imputation of guilt, free from condemnation and punishment, and considered as righteous persons. *It shall be when any one is guilty, he shall confess that he hath sinned, and he shall bring his trespass-offering unto the Lord for his sin that he hath sinned, and shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin-offering before the Lord, and he shall*

shall kill it before the Lord, and it shall be accepted for him; the Priest shall bring the blood and sprinkle it before the Lord, and shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath finned, and it shall be forgiven him. Leviticus.

Now the Apostle expressly said, that *Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many*: that He suffered death, which is the curse and wages of sin, professedly, to make reconciliation for transgressors; *the just for the unjust*. This is the consideration, the ground upon which we have pardon and peace with God. The Law declared that it was *the blood which made the atonement*, that is, the life sacrificed for sin. Therefore, *without shedding of blood there was no remission*. Wherefore, *Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and suffered without the gate that He might sanctify the people with His own blood*. And, *being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*.

And, herein lay the superior efficacy of this sacrifice of Christ, even in the dignity of His character, The Son of God, The Prince of Life, The Lord of Glory—a person of infinite dignity and worth, participating the common nature of all men, yet perfectly free from sin; a man united to God; and, so personally one with God, that it could be truly said, *God purchased his Church with HIS OWN blood*. For, *if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, HOW MUCH MORE shall the blood of Christ, who, through THE ETERNAL SPIRIT, offered HIMSELF without spot to God, purge your conscience?*

science?—That only will satisfy the conscience, which will satisfy God; which the conscience can approve, as worthy of Him; and, in which it can see every thing requisite, to answer all the ends for which sacrifices were appointed. But, the Law having only a shadow of good things to come, could never, with those sacrifices which were offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; and, for this reason, because it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins; and therefore, nothing could be seen in those sacrifices sufficient to produce the effect which God designed, and man's condition required. But, this offering of Christ through THE ETERNAL SPIRIT, had in it every thing proportionate to the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this reason, it was offered once for all, never repeated*. Neither God nor the consciences of men will look for any thing more perfect, nor for any thing to be added to the perfection of this one sacrifice. It was a redemption-price, of inestimable value arising from the dignity of the Redeemer's character. It was the price of man's deliverance from death, the curse and wages of sin; and, in its consequence, it will be the opening of the grave, and of the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Another instance, closely connected with the preceding subject, to shew how necessary it is to read the Old Testament in order to understand the language of the New, may be found in 1 John i. 7. where we are told, that the blood of Jesus Christ

cleanseth

* See Hebrews x. from the 1st to the 23d verse.

cleanseth from all sin ; and, in the ninth verse, *cleanseth* from all unrighteousness. If any one take a dictionary to interpret this *cleaning* from sin and unrighteousness, or have recourse to profane authors, to interpret this term, or to moral philosophers, or to any principles of any experimental philosophy, he will gain nothing by his labour ; or, which is worse than nothing, he will be in danger of being led into error directly opposite to the truth for which he is seeking. He may learn, that *cleaning* signifies the removal of filth or dirt, or any quality, which has rendered a thing less useful and pleasant ; as the fuller's soap discharges stains from cloth ; or as water purifies the body. In a metaphorical sense, *cleaning* is applied by moralists, to denote the removal of bad tempers from the heart ; and, of evil habits from our practice. In this sense, *cleaning* is used by the sacred penman : *Wash ye, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well.* And, again, *Ye shall be as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap to purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer an offering in righteousness.* In these texts, no doubt, *cleaning* is used in the metaphorical sense in which it is used by moralists and mystics. But, still we are at a loss for the true meaning of the term in the text under consideration. Here we are told, that, if we have a right disposition, or that moral cleansing of the heart from ignorance, pride, self-conceit, obduracy or impenitence, and humbly confess our sins ; if we be enlightened with the true and sanctifying knowledge of God, and walk in the truth, as it is in Jesus, with uprightness and sincerity,

sincerity, then we may be sure of another *cleaning* —then, saith the Apostle, *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, and from all unrighteousness.*

If the Apostle had meant no more than a moral renovation of the heart, or what the Divines call *Sanctification*, he would not have said *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth*, but rather *The Spirit of Jesus Christ, The Holy Ghost, cleanseth from all sin.* But, the Apostle saith, *The blood of Christ cleanseth from sin:* and, in the Book of Revelations, *They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* I ask, What sort of cleansing, or whiteness, can be obtained by washing *in blood?* What is the true import of these expressions? What is it that can make our sins, which we have actually committed, and which are as scarlet, to become white as snow; and which, though red like crimson, shall be as the fairest wool?

If we turn to the Old Testament, we may learn, that sacrifices for sins committed are called *Purifications.* They are sometimes called so in our English Bible; and, this is the meaning of the term which is generally used in the original text. When any one had touched any thing forbidden by the Law, he was denominated *unclean*, or guilty; and, in consequence of this pollution, was excluded from all intercourse with God and His people; and, in some cases, was banished from the camp of the congregation, as an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. For people in these circumstances, as before remarked, sacrifices were appointed and offered, to make atonement for them.

them. Their sins confessed, victims were substituted, and put to death in their stead, and burnt upon the altar. The polluted were consequently freed from guilt, or from the imputation of uncleanness ; and were restored to all the privileges of the congregation of Israel. The sacrifices, therefore, were properly called *Purifications* ; and they, for whom the purification-sacrifices were offered, were said to be *purified*, cleansed, from those actions which had rendered them unclean, that is, they were pardoned.

This cleansing was not a moral renovation, or the infusion of new virtues, graces, or godly dispositions ; but, an imputation of innocence and righteousness to them who had sinned ; not a moral change in the state of their souls, but a *legal* or *judicial* absolution from guilt. There is a passage in the New Testament, in which things are said to have been cleansed in this manner, that is, where there was no real change in the nature of the things which are said to have been made clean. *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common, or unclean.* God had imputed uncleanness to certain animals, and had strictly forbidden the use of them for food. But, when he would instruct St. Peter, that the Gentiles were no longer to be regarded as unclean, no longer to be excluded from the camp of Israel, or from the Church and the communion of Saints ; He shewed to Peter, in a vision, an assemblage of all these unclean animals, and a voice came, ordering Peter to slay and eat of them. St. Peter refused, as a thing unlawful, saying, *I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean* ; and the voice answered,

answered, *What God hath cleansed that call not thou common.* Here it was said, that God had cleansed those beasts; which certainly was not done by any change of their nature or qualities; but, was a removal of imputed uncleanness, or of the interdict which the typical Law had imposed against eating of their flesh.

Just so, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin and from all unrighteousness. It is not any moral change of the heart and life; for, this change is supposed to exist already in those who *walk in the light*, and to be manifested by their application to the blood of Christ as a remedy for the guilt of their past sins and of their present involuntary unrighteousnesses; but, is the removal of all guilt of their sins and of all imputation of their unrighteousness, by virtue of that great sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered for sinners, when He shed His blood for them upon the cross. And, in this very chapter, in the passage under consideration, St. John uses the terms *cleaning* and *forgiving* or pardoning of sin, as words of the same import. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

For further confirmation of this important meaning of the text, I appeal to Heb. i. 3, where we read *When the Son of God, had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* Here the Apostle plainly declares that the purgation, or cleansing of our sins, was accomplished by Christ before His ascension; and, that He accomplished it by Himself, or, by the offering up of Himself. So then, the cleansing from

from all sin, is not the sanctification or moral reformation of the human nature by the operation of the divine Spirit, which indeed is an important consequence, but is the justification of our persons before God, by the free pardon of our sins through the death of Christ, as our Purification-Sacrifice.

When a Jew had contracted legal guilt, and was polluted, and disqualified from enjoying the privileges of an Israelite in the communion of Saints, he had a consciousness of guilt within himself, a sense of his uncleanness, an uneasiness of mind in the apprehension of the disadvantages of his disqualification. But, when he brought his Purification-sacrifice, and it was duly offered for him, his faith in the divine appointments and promises delivered him from conscious guilt, and from the uneasiness of his mind : He was at once *legally* cleansed, and cleansed in his own conscience : He returned with a free spirit, with joy and peace, to the communion of the Saints, and the love of the brethren was quickened in him. We may suppose too, that he would feel a greater degree of tenderness of spirit and compassion for the infirmities of others, long-suffering of their faults, gentleness towards them, goodness or generosity of temper, a greater degree of fidelity in his conduct, meekness and temperance. All these effects are produced ^b, as consequences of that cleansing from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, the great Purification-Sacrifice. But, it is easily seen, that the prime and proper idea, of cleansing from sin by the great sacrifice for sin, must be preserved distinct from these effects, otherwise these effects can never

ver be produced. For, if we know not, and believe not, or do not consider, as a thing of infinite importance to us, that we have an High Priest who hath offered one sacrifice for sins every way perfect, and do not look for mercy through this great sacrifice, it is impossible that the blood of Jefus Christ should ever affect our consciences, to purge them from guilt, and impossible that it should have a holy or moral influence upon our hearts and lives. St. John grounds the advantages of Christian fellowship, the actual enjoyment of the communion of Saints upon this very point, *if we walk in the light*; then faith he, *we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*, so that there is no interruption of our peace with God, and of our union with the Saints. And, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses himself upon this subject in the following terms: Having insisted on the remission of sins through the one great Sacrifice, he proceeds to this conclusion: *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through His flesh; and, having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.*

There is a passage in the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, which, if it fail to convince my Reader of the necessity of reading and

and studying the Old Testament in order to understand the New, will evince the great advantage which may be derived from a comparative view of the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Col. i. 14. *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* In the former part of this sentence, the Apostle mentioned a deliverance effected by the glorious power of the Father; *who hath delivered us*, forcibly plucked us^c from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. This deliverance, undoubtedly, means the moral reformation of mankind. Then he adds, *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* He changes his terms; and, his meaning is different; otherwise, the addition is redundant and utterly vain. Here, ver. 14, he expresses the ground of that other deliverance, the consideration, something analogous to a ransom by which a captive is freed from slavery, the price by which his personal liberty is obtained, in regard to which God interposed His power to rescue the Colossians from their miserable condition of moral darkness. The deliverance, mentioned in the thirteenth verse, considered in itself, was simply a deliverance; but, considered in its principle, it was truly a redemption^d, a deliverance obtained at the price of the precious blood of God's dear Son.

But

^c Εγγυσθε, eripuit. Non sim-pliciter, liberavit, sed eripuit. The word signifies by main force to deliver, or pluck away, even as David pulled the lamb out of the bear's mouth.

LEIGH CRITICA SACRA.

^d Redemption does not consist merely in paying a price for the forgiveness of sins, as the Antinomian asserts; nor merely in the moral reformation of mankind, as the Socinian affirms. But, is

But, surely, we are not to depend on the niceties of verbal criticism to understand the Scriptures, which were designed for common use. The Scriptures will best explain themselves by comparison, and generally by historical facts. The doctrine of redemption, in the New Testament, is generally expressed with a direct and evident reference to the typical dispensation ; which points out the method of studying the New Testament ; a method which every one must pursue who would perfectly comprehend the language, the meaning and doctrine of the holy Apostles.

The mind of St. Paul, in writing this part of his Epistle to the Colossians, was strongly impressed with a recollection of the Old-testament history, the history of the typical Israel. In the 12th verse, he mentions *the inheritance of the Saints : giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.* Here, he alludes to the earthly Canaan, the land of promise, which God gave to Abraham and to his seed after him for an inheritance ; typical, no doubt, of that inheritance mentioned by St. Peter ; *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who*

a deliverance obtained through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, as a price, by which the guilt of sin is removed ; and through which, and on account of which, God interposes his power to deliver the slaves of superstition, Ignorance, and vice, and to make them wise, holy, and happy. Significat propriè plenam et perfectam liberationem, omnibus gradibus et numeris absolutam redemtionem. Gerb. Propriè dicitur quum dato pretio redimuntur captivi, velut a Piratis, aut in bello capti. Eras. Est liberatio aliquius ab incommmodo, λύτρη intercedente. Sic Mars redemptio- nis vocem propriè usurpavit, cum dixit,

Si fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit. GROTIUS.

who are *made meet for it*^e. In the thirteenth verse, he distinguishes what it was which the glorious power of the Father had wrought in making them meet for this inheritance: *who hath delivered us from the power of darkness*—referring to the deliverance of Israel from the misery of Egyptian bondage under the tyrannical power of Pharaoh king of Egypt—and *hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son*—alluding to the happiness of Israel under the theocracy, the merciful government of God. And, when he added, *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*, he is still speaking in reference to the typical Israel: he refers to the paschal Lamb, which was offered in sacrifice, to preserve the Israelites from the general destruction of the first-born, and to effect their perfect emancipation.

This last circumstance deserves more particular consideration. The Israelites were not only enslaved to the Egyptian tyranny, but had participated with the Egyptians in their idolatrous practices and vices. Even at the very eve of their deliverance, when God commanded them to forsake the idols of Egypt, so attached were they to these idols, that they disobeyed his express commandment^f. Therefore, in a visitation of the divine judgments upon the Egyptians for their national sins, how shall Israel escape, who at that time were a part, though an inferior part, of the nation, and who had participated with the Egyptians in their iniquity? In allusion to this, the Apostle said, in several of his Epistles, *We are all by nature chil-*

T *and all other children*

^e 1 Peter i. 4.

^f See Ezekiel xx. 6, 7, 8.

aren of wrath, even as others—There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God—both Jews and Gentiles are all alike under sin—The whole world is become guilty before God. How then should the people of Israel in Egypt, or the Jews, or the Gentiles, or any one of the guilty race of mortals, escape the divine judgments, since all have sinned?

By the merciful appointment of God, a Lamb was slain in Egypt, and the blood of this sacrifice was sprinkled upon the entrance into the houses of the Israelites ; and of the Egyptians too, as many as feared the word of the Lord ; for, it was a mixed multitude of both that came out of Egypt. When the destroying Angel, the minister of justice, perceived the blood, he halted at the door from the execution of just judgment, or passed over their houses : as much as to say, Here is death already—Vengeance is executed—Justice is satisfied. Thus the Israelites were preserved from the general destruction ; and then, immediately, led forth by a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. Their emancipation was an act of power, simply a deliverance ; but, in the ground of it, it was properly a redemption, a deliverance obtained by virtue of a ransom, at the price of a sacrifice, by which they were exempted from the wrath due to sin, and due to their sin.

These indeed were merely typical transactions. But, they give the meaning of a more important redemption. In reference to these very transactions, St. Peter described the spiritual deliverance of the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, as a redemption

tion obtained through sanctification of the Spirit and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Ye know, said he, that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but, with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

Behold, then, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world^g: for, even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us^h. He hath said, He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Meⁱ. Let us keep this feast: Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience^k. Let our loins be girt about with truth^l, and our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace^m; our minds intent upon the eternal inheritance, and our hearts assured that He is faithful that hath promised. We shall then experience the glorious power of the eternal Father, rescuing us from the power of Satan, from the seductions of the world, and from the tyranny of our own domineering passions: We shall be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and experience that glorious liberty of serving God with a free spirit, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lifeⁿ.

I have now laid before my Reader a full explanation of the method I would recommend in searching the Scriptures; and, have produced several examples of the utility of this method; and I hope it is now evident, that the Bible is one

^g John i. 29.^h 1 Cor. v. 7.ⁱ John vi. 57.^k Heb. x. 22.^l Ephes. vi. 14. and 1 Peter i. 13.^m Ephes. vi. 15. ⁿ Luke i. 74, 75.

perfect *Whole*; that it is necessary to read the *whole*, in order to understand any one part of the Bible; that we must read the New Testament to understand the Old; and read the Old Testament to understand the language and meaning of the New. It would be an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God, if any man were to exalt his own reason and lean on his own understanding, when God has given a revelation to make us wise: And, it is equally presumptuous, to say a part of the Bible is sufficient, when God has given the *Whole* for our instruction.

I have said nothing in this chapter of the necessity of attending to the context, to study the principal design or general drift, of the passage in which any text stands, the meaning of which we would investigate. This subject has been insisted upon in a former chapter. I content myself here with reminding my Reader of this very important point; and, shall only add, that, if the context, the drift of the passage in which any text is found, do not lead him clearly to the sense which he has been accustomed to put upon the text, or to the meaning which strikes him at the first reading prior to this strict observation of the whole passage, he may be sure that he has misconceived its meaning: And, if the circumstances of persons and things, which gave occasion to that part of the Bible under consideration, do not justify the sense in which he understands any passage, any chapter, or book; or, if it be not justified by the history of God's dispensations in the Old and New Testaments, he may be sure that he does not understand, or has mistaken, the sense and meaning of the whole passage,

passage, the sense and meaning of this part of the Bible.

When the light of Revelation hath in any degree illumined our understanding; or, when in the course of our reading and studying the holy Scriptures, we apprehend the doctrinal and practical truths of the Bible; we must view *ourselves* in this light; we must compare the truths we have learned with the workings of our *own* hearts, with the history of mankind, and with our daily observation and experience. Otherwise the light of Revelation will never produce any sanctifying influence upon our hearts and lives; we shall not feel the importance of those revealed truths, nor regard them accordingly: They will be to us merely as speculative opinions, of no great moment to us; and, will leave us as dead, as barren and unfruitful as we were, when we knew nothing of the contents of the sacred volume of inspiration.

I therefore add the necessity of reading the Scriptures with all lowness of mind, with an obedient spirit, and with earnest prayer. *If any man seemeth to be wise, without divine erudition, let him become a fool that he may be wise. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. No man knoweth the Son but the Father; and, they only who have learned of the Father come to Christ. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* Not the wise and prudent in their own eyes, and who depend upon their own abilities, their secular learning and worldly wisdom; but, *babes,*

the truly humble and sincere inquirers after truth ; who seek the truth to be conformed to it ; and, who pray for God's blessing upon their endeavours ;—These are the persons to whom the Father will reveal His Son in the glory of His divine character ; to whom He will discover the truths of Revelation in their divine lustre, beauty, and importance—truths, which are hidden in the Scriptures from the unholy and profane ; or which, the unholy and profane seeing, see not in their genuine light, proportion, and worth.

It has been said, that people are often converted to God by a single text in the New Testament. This may be urged as a reason against diligence in reading and searching the Scriptures. There is not any fact, the truth of which is more questionable, than the conversion of any one by a single text of Scripture. Every one's conversion to God is effected by the force of revealed truth persuading his mind. And, it is not probable, that any one text is sufficient to reveal the truth of God ; or, that any one chapter of the Bible can be understood by itself. I know not a chapter of the Bible, which more fully and plainly declares the way of life and salvation, than the third chapter of St. John's Gospel. And yet, I believe it impossible that any one can understand this chapter, who is not acquainted with other parts of the Bible. It is related, that a person of distinction, of infidel and libertine principles, was converted by reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. But, in the account of this instance of divine grace and mercy, it appears plainly, that this nobleman's conversion was not effected

effected by the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah taken singly by itself ; but, in connection with other parts of the Scripture ; and particularly, with the history of our Saviour in the New Testament, with which this nobleman was well acquainted ; and, without which, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah would have been as unintelligible to him as it was to another nobleman, the treasurer of queen Candace.

Many, who have read the Scriptures in their youth, who have lived in the society of Christians, and frequently heard Christian discourses, and sermons from the pulpit, are more enlightened, more acquainted with the Bible and the truths of Revelation, than they seem to be, while immersed in the cares, and pleasures, and vices of a profligate age. The rays of divine light in their minds are broken and dissipated by their prejudices, their passions, and evil habits ; and, therefore, have no force to produce any saving influence. But, a single chapter, or a single text of Scripture, may be the means of uniting those rays of heavenly light, so as to produce that clear and steady light of day, by which the objects of Revelation shall be discerned in their divine beauty, proportion, and importance : and, it is this light, acting with force upon the heart and conscience, which sanctifies the soul. This is all that a single chapter, or a single text, can do. And, in this case, the conversion must be attributed to a general knowledge of the Word of God. The same effect is produced by awful providences and the near views of death ; circumstances, which call for serious reflection, and unite and concentrate

trate the rays of divine truth ; and, in this way, effect the conversion of finners.

By urging so much diligence in reading the Word of God, I may seem to discourage the poor, who have flender abilities and little time for study. God is merciful.—He is so. We cannot think too highly of the divine condescensions, of the divine goodness, justice, and mercy. He does not reap, nor expect to reap, where He has not sowed: He does not require brick without straw: much less will He demand impossibilities. He pities our mean condition. He knows whereof we are made. He makes allowances for all our *unavoidable* disadvantages, and supplies, by extraordinary aid, our *involuntary* disabilities. *A man is accepted and blessed according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not.* This is true in every case. But, this is far from being an argument against the utmost diligence which any man can use. Let every one exert himself as much as he can. Let the poor read and hear, and meditate, and pray, with as much diligence as circumstances will allow; and then, though they neither read nor hear, so much as some others, they will be equally wise unto salvation.

If any one say, My own reason is a sufficient guide—It is so, for those purposes, for which reason was given to men. It is sufficient to render you capable of receiving divine instruction, but not of doing without it. It is of the greatest use, in cultivating those other talents which God hath intrusted to us; and, in the improvement of those means, which, either in the primitive constitution
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of the world, or under the extraordinary dispensation of grace, He hath imparted to us. But, let it be considered, that we are dependent creatures; and, by the introduction of sin into the world, are depending continually upon divine mercy for extraordinary aids; and, neither reason, nor the Bible itself, nor any other books, nor any human instructor, can make us wise unto salvation without God. He hath appointed the means, reading and hearing His Word; and, if we despise or neglect these means, or use them in self-sufficiency, it is a daring impiety and an insolent presumption; and, it will be vain to expect God's blessing in the use of any other means, which our folly or pride shall prefer.

Let me, therefore, earnestly commend my Reader to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build him up, and to give him an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. *Acts xx. 32.*

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XIX.

JEHOVAH ALEIM.

GOD hath so tempered together the various parts of the human body, that they have all a relation to, and a dependence upon, one another. The more feeble members are necessary: they contribute to the general good of the whole body. Yet, there is a wonderful provision against accidents and injuries. If a gland, or vein, or artery, or other organ, receive an injury, or be destroyed, another shall, in many cases, supply the defect; and often in so perfect a degree, that we feel no inconvenience. It is just so, in that wonderful composition, the Bible, which is so necessary to the spiritual life. It is useful in all its parts. Yet, if any part of the Bible be injured by transcribers; if a word, or text, be omitted, or imperfectly translated; there are other texts which so clearly express the same truth in some other form, and which are so perfectly translated, that we may obtain the whole truth of God in every copy of the Bible, and in every translation.

I shall now produce an example, to prove that the imperfections, which may be found in every translation

translation of the holy Scriptures, are not so great, that they must necessarily frustrate the merciful purpose of God in giving a revelation to mankind.

There is no greater difficulty, in translating the Scriptures, than that which arises from the significant and full meaning of the divine names, in *Hebrew*; because there are no words in any other language, which correspond with them, Here, therefore, Translators have failed, more than in any other part of their undertaking.

The word *Lord*, which we so frequently read in our English Bible, is generally designed to be a translation of the Hebrew word *Jehovah*; and, it is always *Jehovah* in the original text, where the word *Lord* is printed in capital letters. *Lord*, in the English language, is a name of authority, of power and dominion, and has relation to servants and subjects; and when applied to God, it expresses what God is to His creatures in His government of the world. In this sense, *Lord* is no translation of the word *JEHOVĀH*. It not only fails to express the meaning of Scripture, but perverts that meaning.

JEHOVAH is the incommunicable name. It is never given to any creature; to any Being, who is not by nature absolutely and essentially God. We never find any terms of relation joined to this word **JEHOVAH**: We never read *my Jehovah*, or *our Jehovah*, *your Jehovah*, *their Jehovah*. The meaning of the word will not admit of any such language; for, it expresses what God is in *Himself*, His independent, self-existence; what He was in Himself before all time, before all worlds, and

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all creatures which inhabit them ; and, what He is, and will be, if the whole creation were to become extinct again.

There is another word ; for example, Gen. i. 1.
“ In the beginning God, *the Aleim*, created the
“ heaven, and the earth.”—This word is a term of relation, and expresses what God is *out of Himself*, in relation to His creatures. Therefore, we read *my Aleim*, *our Aleim*, *your Aleim*, *their Aleim*, the *Aleim of Aleim*, *of Abraham*, *of Isaac*, and *of Jacob*, the *Aleim of Israel*, and the *Aleim of the whole earth*. It is a plural term : It signifies more than one : It denotes Powers, Agents, Existencies, Persons, who joined in council to create, and who created the world ; and who *engaged* conditionally to support every dependent Being : for, the term expresses, or implies, some agreement, some stipulation, some covenant-obligation and engagement by oath, to preserve and bless, agreeably to the situation or conditions, whatever they are or may be, of those who are comprehended in the covenant or oath, that is, of those to whom Jehovah is *ALEIM*. But, *God*, in the vulgar use of the term, merely expresses the indistinct idea of some great Power above us, the same which the unlearned mean, when they say *God-almighty*. In the mouth of the learned, it often signifies the same as the more philosophical term *Nature*, an unknown, undefined, plastic energy : and sometimes it denotes *The Being*, The supreme Being, The eternal self-existing Spirit ; and then, it is more properly a translation of the word *Jehovah* than of *Aleim*.

On supposition that I have faithfully expressed
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the true meaning of the divine names, *JEHOVAH ALEIM*, and at present I ask for no more than a mere supposition, my Reader will readily apprehend that *Lord*, which is simply a name of dominion, government, authority, and power, is no translation of the word *Jehovah*; and, that the vague, indeterminate word *God* is no translation of the word *Aleim*: No:—not in the least degree. The word *God* cannot possibly excite in the mind of a mere English scholar any idea, even so much as the most imperfect idea, of what is meant by the original *Hebrew* term *Aleim*.

If I lead my Reader a little out of his depth, I trust that I shall soon set him on firm footing again. For, I would not venture these remarks on the meaning of the *Hebrew* names, were I not confident that they can be justified by our English translation of the Scriptures, and the doctrine made convincingly plain to the mere English Reader, if he will diligently search his Bible in the vulgar translation.

A Being, who does not possess a nature absolutely independent, cannot say, in regard to past, present, and future, *I AM*. But, this manner of speaking is proper to the nature of God, or to the mode of the divine existence, which is *THE SAME*, in one eternal *NOW*—He that is; He that liveth; He that *was*, and *is*, and is *to come*; The Eternal Life; He that hath Life *in Himself*; The necessary, self-existing, independent Being. This is the meaning of the name *JEHOVAH*. *I AM*; *I AM THAT I AM*^o. And when this word, *Jehovah*, is joined with *Aleim*, it is a declaration that the persons, who are *Aleim*, are absolutely

^o Exodus iii. 14, compared with chap. vi. 3.

lutely supreme, and all-sufficient to support and bless those, in every possible state of their existence to whom they are *Aleim*; and that they are the cause and source of all other existencies, the fountain of life and happiness; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things.

Aleim is plural, and is used in the plural number, many hundred times, in the Old-testament Scriptures. Surely, this so frequent use of the term, in the plural number, could not be by accident, nor without some important design, considering that it hath a singular number, as Churches hath *Church*, and men the singular *man*. The *Aleim*, plural, *created the heaven and the earth*. Gen. i. 1. Therefore, the Preacher, *Ecclesiastes*, requires every one to remember his *Creator* in the days of his youth; in the original, it is *Creators*, plural. In Isaiah liv. where we read, “for thy *Maker* is “thy *husband*;” in the original it is, for thy *Makers* are thy *husbands*. And, in Psalm cxlix. where we read “Let Israel rejoice in his *Maker*;” or, in Him that made him; in the original it is, Let Israel rejoice in his *Makers*, plural. In many other passages, where the terms express a plurality, our translators have rendered them in the singular number.

One thing very remarkable must be mentioned. In many passages, and in the same sentence, and in the same clause of a sentence, the word *Aleim* occurs as the name of the true God, and the name of the object of idolatrous worship. Our translators, in this case, have translated the word *Aleim*, where it expresses the living and true God, in the singular number; and where it expresses the object of idolatrous

idolatrous worship, they have given it the plural term, *Gods*. In the compass of three or four words only, in Deut. x. 17. the word *Aleim* is translated, in the two first instances, singular, in the third plural. “The Lord your God is God “of Gods.” In the original, JEHOVAH your ALEIM is ALEIM of ALEIM. The word is exactly the same, when the name of the true God and of the false: yet, our translators have rendered the one plural, and the other singular.—In the beginning of the Decalogue, we read “I am the “Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the “land of Egypt;” and, in the first commandment, Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. But, the word *God* in the preface is exactly the same word, in the plural number, as in the commandment. Why *Aleim* should be translated plural in the commandment, and not in the preface, no other reason can be given than the danger of misapprehending the term, as giving countenance to polytheism. But, neither in the one instance, nor in the other, should the word *God* or *Gods* have been used; because, neither in the singular, nor in the plural, does either of them express the meaning of *Aleim*.

Having pointed out the greatest imperfection in our translation of the Bible; and which indeed is the imperfection of almost every other translation; and necessarily so, because there are not words in other languages corresponding with the *Hebrew* names—I now address myself to a far more agreeable task, to shew how this imperfection may be corrected in the use of the English translation, that is, to prove that a mere English scholar may obtain a clear understanding of the doctrine which

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is obscured by this imperfect and faulty rendering of the divine names: and, in doing this, I hope to justify the interpretation which I have presumed to offer to my Reader.

At the twenty-sixth verse of the first chapter of *Genesis*, we read, And God (*the Aleim*) said, Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness. To whom was this spoken? They were more than one, or one of many, who said Let *us* make in *our* image. Surely, JEHOVAH did not call the Angels to be his Counsellors, nor to be his Assistants, or Co-adjutors! No:—“*With whom* “ took He counsel! Who hath instructed Him? “*He* stretched out the heavens *alone*, and spread “ abroad the earth by *Himself*,” that is, without the aid of any creature. He that built all things is God, by the greatness of His own almighty power, and by His own most perfectly consummate wisdom. Therefore, He did not say to Angels, Let *US* make.

Though a mere English Reader could never discover, by the assistance of the English translation of the Bible, that the word *God* is plural in the *Hebrew* text, yet, here he meets with a plain intimation of a plurality; and of a plurality in the supreme Being. For, the Angels had no share in this work. It was in the image of *God*, and not of Angels, in which man was created. And, how could God say, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness, if there be no plurality in God? or, if God were absolutely, in exclusion of every idea of plurality, metaphysically ONE?

It is in vain to answer, This is mere phraseology, or spoken after the manner of kings; who assume
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the plural style for the sake of dignity, as representing, and comprehending within themselves, all the powers of the state. To countenance this wretched evasion, it should have been proved, that, when Moses wrote, or before, kings used this manner of speaking. But, this cannot be pretended; for, the plural style of speaking with imperial dignity is a modern refinement. All the patriarchs, and judges, and kings of Israel, spake and wrote in the singular number, the common and simple manner of expressing an individual person. Besides, Moses, in the first chapter of Genesis, relates, and I suppose truly relates, as a faithful historian, what God spake before kings, or any human beings, were created.

Let my Reader look to the end of the third chapter of Genesis, and he will find a manner of speaking in the plural number, which not only expresses a plurality, but excludes the wretched evasion of mere phraseology and accommodation. The Tempter had insidiously promised Ye shall be as *Gods*, as *the Aleim*; for, as yet, false Gods, or Idols, were not known. Here, our translators have rendered Aleim, the name of the true God, in the plural number. At the twenty-second verse, in reference to this temptation, the LORD God, JEHOVAH ALEIM, said, The Man is become as *ONE of US*: Here is one of many. Aleim, therefore, is plural in its *meaning*, as well as in its grammatical form, or ending, expressing a plurality of persons, or agents: and, *one of us* is a manner of speaking which no king ever did, or could, use, when speaking of himself.

In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, we read

how *Jehovah* appeared unto Abraham. Abraham lift up his eyes, and looked, and lo, *three men* stood by *him*^P. They are called *Jehovah*, and are spoken to as *Jehovah*; a plurality of divine persons, who were JEHOVAH ALEIM. Compare Genefis xxi. 1, 2, 6, with Chap. xviii. 1, 2, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15.

In the sixth of Isaiah, the Seraphim are heard, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy, *Jehovah*, LORD of Hosts. That this hymn was addressed to a plurality of persons, is intimated in the threefold repetition of the word *Holy*; and this plurality of persons is clearly expressed in the eighth verse—I heard the voice of the *Lord*, not of *Jehovah* here in the original, but of *Adonai*^q, saying, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for US?*

As the fault of our English translation, in the very imperfect rendering of the divine Names, is a fault which runs through every part of the Old Testament; therefore, the English Reader must expect but few texts to correct this fault, or to balance this disadvantage, in the Old Testament taken by itself, that is, without the aid of the New-testament Scriptures. He may, however, observe, that several distinct persons are mentioned

by

^P By him, i. e. faith Bate in his Literal Translation published by Mr. Parkhurst, *By Jebovab*, (who in the first verse it is said, appeared unto Abraham) or the divine glory which appeared and shewed the men to be the *three persons* of the Godhead, in which character they speak and are spoken to. Sometimes in the *plural*, sometimes in the *fingular* number; sometimes called *Men*, sometimes *Jebovab*.

^q *Adonai*, lord, ruler, governor: but, in ver. 5, This *Adonai*, lord, is expressly said to be the KING, JEHOVAH, LORD of Hosts: and, in John xii. 41, This *Adonai*, is said to be THE GLORY of Christ, i. e. THE LOGOS, THE WORD, which tabernacled in the humanity. Compare this with John i. 14.

by the names THE LORD; THE WORD of THE LORD, frequently appearing in the human form; THE SPIRIT of THE LORD; THE LORD HIS REDEEMER, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.—He may observe, that there are more persons than one, who are called THE LORD, that is, JEHOVAH; thus Gen. xix. 24. Then THE LORD rained upon Sodom brimstone and fire from THE LORD out of heaven. The same in *Malachi* iii. 1. THE LORD whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold HE shall come faith THE LORD of Hosts. The English Reader will also observe, that a divine person is mentioned in the Old Testament who should appear in the human form, and be born into this world; who should be called God, *Immanuel*, *The everlasting Father*, *The mighty God*, THE LORD our righteousness. *The Prince of Peace*. See Job xix. 25. Isaiah ix. 6. Compared with chap. x. 20, 21. Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

When our Saviour was baptized, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son: and, the Holy Ghost was seen in some medium of appearance, or bodily shape, descending like a dove upon Him; not in the form of a dove, but after the manner of a dove, hovering over and alighting upon the place of its rest.—We are admitted into the Church, by baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—There are three that bear record, witness, in heaven, The Father, The Word, and the Holy Ghost.—St. Paul prayed for all manner of Blessings on the Corinthians, in the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and in the love of God, and in the communion, or fellowship, of the Holy Ghost.

Baptism is another word for washing, or the cleansing away any defilement by the application of water. The spiritual baptism, which is the baptism of Christ, represented by the operation of washing in water, is the cleansing, or the deliverance of our souls, discharging us from our former condition of sin and death. And whereas Baptism is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, it signifies our entire obligation to the divine persons in their several offices, and that we owe all the blessings of *salvation*, to their concurrence, agency, power, mercy, and grace.

It may seem unaccountable to the Reader, that the *Aleim* are not mentioned, by this name, in the New Testament, or, that the divine persons have denominations so different in the New Testament from any thing we read in the Law of Moses. It is this, which has induced many to suspect that the interpretation of the divine Names, which has been presented to the Reader, is a fanciful interpretation that has no solid ground in the *Hebrew* Scriptures. The *Aleim* are not called *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, in the Mosaic account of the Creation, because, in relation to the Creation, the words, *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, would have no meaning. And, the *Aleim* could not be called *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, in the typical Law, not only because the very nature of that Law would not admit of any open declaration of the sublime mysteries of Christianity, which were purposely hidden under that shadowy dispensation; but

but also, because the Law, as a political institution, or national covenant, was not grounded upon any act of God in the relative characters of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*; but, upon the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt by the mighty power and stretched-out arm of Jehovah Aleim, or of the Aleim as *Jehovah*. See Exodus vi. 2, 3, 6, 7.—The names, *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, have relation intirely to the conception, birth, death, resurrection, and exaltation, of Jesus Christ; and therefore, though the Prophets often speak of God as a *Father*, and of His *Son*, and *Spirit*, and of the great and merciful things to be accomplished by Them, that is, by the *Aleim* in these characters, it is always in reference to, and in a prophetical declaration of, the Christ of God.—And, if my Reader think it any objection to the interpretation that has been given of *Aleim*, that the ALEIM are not mentioned by this name in the New Testament, and therefore, doubt whether the Trinity of the New Testament be the ALEIM of the Old: I would ask, whether for the same reason, he will reject the interpretation which has been given of the name *Jehovah*, and doubt whether the God of the New Testament be self-existent, or the JEHOVAH of the Old Testament, merely because JEHOVAH is not mentioned by this name in the Apostolical writings, the Gospels and Epistles.

The word *Aleim*, or, which is the same in the language of the Christian Church, the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, do not express any idea of what God is in His own nature, or the mode of His Being, or the relation of one person to the

other in the divine *essence*, in which there can be neither *Father* nor *Son*; no relations of superiority and inferiority; no first, nor second, nor third.

The ALEIM, are called *JEHOVAH*, to distinguish the true ALEIM from those Powers in nature, which the idolaters worshipped, and whose existence and influence were derived; that is, they were mere creatures. When the Scriptures say that *Jehovah Aleim* is *one* Jehovah, or adverbially the *only* Jehovah, or Jehovah *alone*, it is an affirmation in opposition to the false *Aleim*, or Gods many of the Heathen. It does not at all express a singularity of person, or a metaphysical unity in the supreme Being; but *this*, that the *Aleim* of Israel are the only Aleim upon whom we may rely with perfect confidence, as able to fulfil their federal engagements, their revealed purposes and promises; because the Aleim alone whose name is JEHOVAH, self-existent, are supreme and all-sufficient; which implies that all other Gods, all other *Aleim*, are creatures, who, of themselves, can neither do good nor evil.

When men grasp at what God has not held out to their faith; when they attempt to penetrate through the thick cloud and darkness, under which God has concealed the secrets of His own Existence, their attempts are vain. They become fools, when they seek to be wise above what is written in the Scriptures of truth. The doctrine of the Trinity, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, is as plain as this philosophical truth, *Man consists of soul and body*. Nothing can be expressed plainer than these propositions, The *Aleim* are *Jehovah*; There are Three agents, or persons, self-existing; These

These three have one independent nature, one mind and will, and are united in every divine operation ; These Three were the Creators, and are the Saviours of Men. But, when men foolishly, and very presumptuously, attempt, from the use of the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, to discover and explain the mode or manner of God's Being, they then involve themselves in difficulties inextricable. These are names of office, in a special dispensation, and not of nature absolutely. That they are names of office, appears by this : One of the divine Persons bears the name of *Holy Ghost* or Holy Spirit ; and, He neither is, nor can be, more perfectly *holy*, nor more a *spirit*, than the other divine Persons ; that is, *Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit*, cannot express the *nature* of one of the divine Persons, so as to *distinguish* that person from the other, in regard to their nature or the mode of their existence.

It has been noticed before, that the word *Aleim* implies some covenant obligation, established by oath, to support and bless those to whom Jehovah is *Aleim*. This may be proved by Deut. xxix. 12, 13, where the Children of Israel are represented, all of them, standing before THE LORD their GOD, to enter or pass into COVENANT with THE LORD their GOD and into HIS OATH, *ALE*, which THE LORD their GOD made with them, that He might establish them for a people unto Himself, and that He might be unto them—not *a* God, but *ALEIM*, as He had *sworn*—that is, according to the express form of the words in the Hebrew text, *Jehovah Aleim* brought them into covenant and into His OATH,

ALE, that He might be *Aleim*, confederates with them, their sworn Friends and Allies. This meaning of the word, *Aleim*, the Apostate nations preserved long after they had fallen away from the true God; for, thus they prayed to their Idol, representative of the false *Aleim*, “*Deliver me, for thou art my God,*” appealing to some covenant-obligation, by which Deliverance, or Salvation, was expected from the object of idolatrous worship; whether that object were the *Heavens*, or any other *Powers in nature*, who might interpose between the idolaters and the evil they feared. See Isaiah xliv. 17.

There is not any thing we read of more frequently in the Scriptures than the *covenant* and *oath* of God. Thus, Gen. xvii. *THE LORD appeared to Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God, or the Lord all-sufficient, walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee—and I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant*, to be (not a God, as in

* Διαθηκη, a disposition, institution, appointment. It signifies, faith *Iunius*, neither a testament, nor a covenant, nor an agreement, but, as the import of the word simply requires, a disposition, or institution of God. The Hebrew word in the Old Testament, which almost constantly answers to διαθηκη in the LXX, is בְּרִית, which properly denotes a purification, or purification-sacrifice, never, strictly speaking, a covenant. I am well aware, our translators have rendered the

word διαθηκη by covenant, and a very erroneous and dangerous opinion has been built on that exposition, as if polluted guilty man could covenant or contract with God for his salvation, or had any thing else to do in this matter, but humbly to submit and accept of God's dispensation of purification and salvation through the all-toning sacrifice of the real בְּרִית, or purifier, Christ Jesus.

PARKHURST'S Lexicon.
Grotius judiciously remarks,
faith

in our English version, but) *ALEIM unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, for an everlasting possession ; and I will be their God, ALEIM to them.* Now, it appears plainly in a variety of passages, and particularly in Heb. vi. 13, and following verses, that this Covenant and Oath, declared to Abraham, regarded all the heirs of promise, of the promise of *eternal inheritance*, and their interest in the divine mercies. It importeth this, that the *Aleim* were bound by the covenant, the constitution of *Jehovah*, to effect the eternal happiness of all the Israel of God, to be confederate with them against all their enemies, against sin and death, and hell and Satan, and the seed of Satan upon earth ; and, as bound by oath, their sworn friends and allies, never to forsake them ; neither here nor in the grave. *Jehovah* is not *God, Aleim*, of the dead, but of the living ; therefore, they to whom He is *Aleim*, though dead and buried, having still a relation to life, and still a Being, by virtue of this constitution of JEHOVAH ALEIM, must rise again ; for, otherwise, the *ALEIM* would not be *Aleim* in truth and righteousness. *Jehovah* proved Himself to be *ALEIM* to the heirs of promise,

faith Mr. Parkhurst, that what Moses and the other sacred writers call בְּרִית (which word he had just observed that the LXX and the inspired writers of the New Testament interpret by διαθήκη) is generally of that sort as to require no consent from one of the parties ; since its obligatory force arises solely from the command and

authority of the *superior*, as of God suppose, who doth however sometimes oblige Himself of his own accord by promise.

Quoted from POLE's Synops.

I add, Συμβίτη, which signifies a mutual stipulation, or agreement between parties who have a right to refuse consent, is never used by the sacred writers.

mise, in the *Hebrew* sense of this word, by assuming the human nature, by the incarnation of the *WORD*, and, dwelling in the person of Jesus Christ, by redeeming His people ; and still proves Himself to be *Aleim* to them, by enlightening their minds and sanctifying their hearts, by preserving them, by putting down their enemies, by making all things work together for their good. And, He declares Himself to be their God, by his irrevocable promise ; and will yet prove Himself to be their God, in the full sense of the word *Aleim*, by raising them up out of their graves, and crowning them with immortal glory.

JEHOVAH was ALEIM to innocent Adam, and supported him in Being, and blessed him during his continuance in the state of innocence : and He was ALEIM still, though no longer *their* ALEIM, when he executed the stipulated curse denounced as the wages of sin. It is not possible that any of the constitutions of JEHOVAH ALEIM should fail to obtain their full effect and perfect accomplishment.—JEHOVAH became ALEIM to Abraham, in regard to the land of Canaan, and to his seed after him. He preserved and delivered them, and, at the appointed time, brought them into possession of the holy land ; by which He proved Himself to be their ALEIM. *Ye know, said Joshua, in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which JEHOVAH your ALEIM spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and NOT ONE thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, as all good things are come upon you, which JEHOVAH your ALEIM promised*

mised you ; so that JEHOVAH bring upon you all evil things, until He have destroyed you from off this good land which JEHOVAH your ALEIM hath given you. When ye have transgressed the COVENANT of JEHOVAH your ALEIM which He COMMANDED you,—then shall the anger of JEHOVAH be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which He hath given you*.—But, when JEHOVAH became ALEIM to mortal men, in relation to their state of sin and death, and in relation to another kind of life and another world, another scene of providence was to be exhibited. One of the ALEIM, THE WORD, was made flesh, and tabernacled, dwelt, in that holy thing born of the Virgin Mary, and which, being conceived by the power of the Highest, was called THE SON OF GOD : not of one person in the godhead, but of THE ALEIM. The design of this wonderful providence, in the incarnation of THE WORD, by which all the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily, or substantially resided in Christ ; through which, He could say, THE FATHER IS IN ME AND I IN HIM, and I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE, united,—the design, I say, of this wonderful providence was, to accomplish the redemption and salvation of men. For, to redeem and save sinful, guilty creatures upon whom the irreversible sentence of death is executed, and to recover

* The repeated change of name in this text, Joshua xxiii. is very remarkable. When the good things promised, and the accomplishment of the promises, are mentioned, then it is Jehovah

Aleim ; but when evil things are denounced, and the execution of deserved vengeance is mentioned, then it is Jehovah, not Jehovah Aleim, who doeth it.

recover them from a state of sin and death to a spiritual and immortal life, in a way consistent with the glory of God, and so as the divine perfections might be illustrated in the highest degree, it was necessary that the Captain of their salvation should participate with them and be made like them in all things, especially in suffering the curse of sin. It was necessary that Christ, **THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT**, should offer Himself without spot to God for us, a propitiatory sacrifice. By virtue of this great sacrifice (*great*, because offered **THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT** which dwelt in Him) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Another divine Person assumed the name of **FATHER**, to express the paternal love of God to His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, appointing Him heir of all things, and adopting all believers through Him to the eternal inheritance. The paternal love of God was manifested in raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead; in setting Him at His own right hand, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, in this world, and in that which is to come; making Him **THE HEAD** over all things for His body's sake the Church. The paternal love of God was manifested in the outpouring of the divine Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and is manifested in all those divine influences of the Spirit, by which Sinners are excited to repentance, and by which the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified. God *so* loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son for

for us ; and, what manner of love is this, which the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God ; that we should be treated as such, as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ !

Another divine person assumed the name of THE HOLY GHOST, or SPIRIT, to signify His gracious influence in sanctifying the humanity of our Saviour ; and, in sanctifying all the elect people of God, dispensing gifts, supernatural, extraordinary, miraculous gifts, for the work of the ministry, and abundant graces for the edifying of the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ. It is in regard to the nature of His office, that He is called the Holy Ghost, or The Inspirer of Holiness, The Sanctifying Spirit : and, the benefit of His agency is called *The Communion* of the Holy Ghost, *the fellowship* which Believers have with The Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another, *the Communion of Saints*, by the holy inspiration, the sanctifying influence of this one and the self-same Spirit.

And now, let me ask, Whether the interpretation, which has been given of the divine names, be not confirmed by the concurrent testimony of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in our English translation of the Bible—whether the texts which have been quoted, and there are a multitude of other equivalent and subordinate texts in harmony with these, do not prove that there are divine Persons who are Jehovah, who were the Creators and are the Saviours of men—and, whether it be not obvious to the English Reader of the Scriptures, that these divine Persons sustain

sustain distinct names, characters, and offices, in the economy of our redemption and salvation ; and, that they are engaged by oath, establishing an everlasting constitution, founded upon a propitiatory sacrifice, to save and bless mankind in discharging the offices which answer to their several names and characters. I know full well, that the light of traditional revelation and the secret influence of the divine Spirit accompanies the serious reading and studying the sacred Scriptures ; and that, without these, the Scriptures are not sufficient to make any one wise unto salvation. But, this may be said as well of reading and studying the Scriptures in the original languages as in a translation. And, it is certain matter of fact, that there are many Christians, who have learned and been assured of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, from the English Bible ; and have attained to the knowledge of JEHOVAH ALEIM, though they remained ignorant of there being any such names as *Jehovah Aleim* in any part of the Scriptures. Such gracious provision is there in this wonderful composition, that if one part be obscured, or suppressed, or destroyed, *the Truth* shall still shine forth and never perish !!

GLORIA DEO IN EXCELSIS.

CHAPTER

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

Parish Church of Walsall,

AT THE

VISITATION

OF THE

ARCHDEACON OF STAFFORD,

MAY 3, 1796.

And above all these things put on *Charity*, which is the bond of perfectness, Col. iii. 14. "where Charity, or Love, is called, συμπόνιος της τελειωτητος, the bond of perfectness, i.e. says Whitby, the most perfect bond of UNION among Christians."

PARK. LEX.

КОМЕДИЯ

СОВРЕМЕННОСТИ

and employed labouring to bring me up, did he
not? And now, when I have got my
victor, I will not let him go. I will not
let him to any man, and I will not let him
go. And if he be not fit for his master,
I CORINTHIANS XIII. 31.

**AND YET SHEW I UNTO YOU A MORE EXCELLENT
WAY.**

THAT, which this great Apostle of Jesus Christ counted excellent; THAT, which *He* called *more* excellent, in comparison of what was highly esteemed at Corinth, and, in comparison of those divine gifts which *deserved* the zeal of the Corinthian Church; and, (if we take the exact meaning of his expression) THAT, which St. Paul esteemed *superlatively** excellent; must be excellent indeed, and well worthy of our present meditations.

This most excellent way, which the Apostle recommended to the Corinthians, he called **CHARITY**. The name is well known; but, unfortunately, the thing intended by it, is too little understood, too little practised.

Metaphysical Divines treat of Charity too abstractly, without relation to any subject. Sometimes, Charity is described, more as a political or moral virtue, than a Christian grace. Sometimes Christian Charity has been expressed too indefinitely,

nately, as a spirit of universal benevolence ; and then the terms, *Charity* and *Catholic Spirit*, are synonymous. In common language, Charity seems to signify, either Alms-giving, or that latitudinarian *Opinion*, which makes no distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, order and confusion.

But, let us attend to St. Paul, who can best explain his own meaning.

The twelfth chapter of this Epistle treats of miraculous gifts ; of which the Corinthians were very ambitious, as tending to distinguish those upon whom they were bestowed. St. Paul corrected this vain conceit, by telling the Corinthians that these extraordinary gifts were imparted for the general advantage of the Church ; were given to those who had them, *to profit withal*, that is, to use them for the edification of the Church, and not to gratify pride and foment divisions. He then proceeds to speak of the *Unity* of the Church, comparing it with the human body, which, though composed of many members, is yet *One* ; *for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*. He goes on with the comparison, shewing that the members of this one body have a mutual relation to each other, and derive advantages from one another ; God having so *tempered the body together*, that even the inferior and weaker parts are necessary to the good of the whole ; and, have a more frequent and evident usefulness, than those other parts of the body which are accounted more noble and excellent. He shews, that the design of the Creator, in thus tempering the body together, was to increase the advantage of every part,

part, and of the whole together ; that there should be no schism in the body ; but, that the members should have the same care one for another. And, therefore, whether one member suffer, all the members, by virtue of their physical union, sympathize, or suffer with it ; or, one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. He then applies this illustration to the Corinthian Church : *Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* Some are *Apostles, Prophets, Teachers* ; some *Workers of miracles* ; others have the particular office and power to heal diseases ; some are *Affiliants* to the principal officers in the Church ; others appointed and qualified to order and maintain its discipline ; some have the gift of *speaking* in many languages ; and, others of *interpreting* them, of unfolding the mysteries of Christianity, of expounding the Old-testament Scriptures, and of unveiling the typical dispensation : but, all these gifts were bestowed on particular persons, as a common stock, for the general advantage of the whole Church ; and, were valuable, only, and in the degree, as they were used to this end. Therefore, he wished the Corinthians to *covet earnestly the best gifts*, those which most tended to public utility. *And yet*, added he, *I will shew you a more excellent way* : not a more excellent way to private advantage, but, to general utility ; a more excellent way to build up and perfect the Church.

This more excellent way is described in the thirteenth chapter, where the Apostle speaks of *Charity* ; and which is connected with the subject of the twelfth chapter by this preceding sentence. In the fourteenth chapter, the Apostle treats of

prophesying. He prefers this to all other miraculous gifts, as tending in a greater degree to public utility. And, the subject of this fourteenth chapter is connected, with the thirteenth and twelfth, by the first verse : *Follow after Charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

This connection observed, it will be evident, that there is an unity of design in these three chapters ; and that the single object of St. Paul, throughout the whole, was to treat of the means of edifying the Church in its aggregate condition. Therefore, in the thirteenth chapter, he did not intend to commend Charity as a private virtue, or as marking and perfecting the character of Christians individually ; not as a spirit of universal benevolence to all mankind :—No ; nor as a spirit of love towards Christians in general ; but, as an uniting spirit, joining all the Christians of one place in holy fellowship, consolidating the members of any particular Church, and engaging them to seek and promote each others advantage and the increase and perfection of the whole body. This uniting spirit is preferable to all miraculous gifts, as more conducive to the interests of Christianity. Miraculous powers were soon to be withdrawn ; when the Church would exist and flourish without them : but, at no time, could it prosper without this spirit of unity and concord. Yea, this spirit of unity and concord is of more importance to the Church than faith and hope ; which, being private graces, were of advantage only, or principally, to the individuals who possessed them ; whereas, Charity, that harmonious virtue,

virtue, promotes and secures the prosperity of the Church in its present militant state, and will be its glory in heaven.

The universal Church is composed of a multitude of smaller societies, or distinct congregations; each of which hath its proper Bishop or Pastor, its rules, order and discipline. Were it not for these particular societies, or congregations, the Church would be invisible: the world could not discern its existence; could not be enlightened by its glory; nor seasoned by its salt: The Charity of Christians could not be brought into actual exercise; or, only in a very imperfect degree, if they were to remain without any visible union, like an army not yet organized; or, like the stragglers of an army, marching without order, and dispersed every where in an enemy's country: They could not assist and edify, or support and defend each other; nor assail their enemies without any hope of subduing them.

The great Head of the Church hath, therefore, ordained, that the Christians of one place shall come together *in* one place, and compose a visible society, harmonizing in spirit, and in the *general* form of its constitution with other particular Churches, and making all together one Catholic, or universal Church. And, it is very evident, that Charity, or love of the Brethren, as a private virtue or grace in Christians individually, tends to the production of local, or particular Churches; for, it will naturally influence Christians, living in the same neighbourhood, to seek personal intercourse and fellowship with each other; and so produce a social union and family-compact.

Here; in each of these particular Churches, that Charity, which affectionately embraces every one that is faithful in Christ Jesus; and which indeed hath a tendency within itself to promote the happiness of all God's creatures throughout the Universe, is reduced, as it were, to a point: Its energy is increased by confinement; by the circumstances of time, place, and persons; and the more so, by becoming reciprocal in the actual exertions of its power. All the members of each particular Church have a kind of partnership, a common interest, in whatever relates to it. It's honour, reputation, disgrace; it's advantages, or disadvantages; its prosperity, or decay; it's friends, or it's enemies; must and will be considered, as the honour, reputation, disgrace; advantages, or disadvantages; the friends, or enemies; of every member that holds communion with it. This common interest tends to confirm and increase that Charity, by which the members of each particular Church were at first united, and greatly tends to promote and secure the Church's prosperity.

Christians, while they meet together in one place, and at one time, and view each other as sharers together in the love of God their common Father, in the grace of Jesus Christ their only Saviour, and in the communion of the Holy Ghost the sanctifier of every one of them, and, as called to the hope of the same eternal inheritance;—while they are fed with the same spiritual food, and eat the body of Christ and drink His blood, as brethren, at the same table; while they behold countenances marked for glory, and, by nearer inspection,

inspection, in the intercourses of religious friendship, discern the graces, peculiar sentiments, and varied virtues, of lovely souls bearing the image of God ; they cannot but *love another with a pure heart fervently*. Their experience, their trials and temptations ; their comforts and discomforts ; their hopes and fears ; have so much similarity in them, and are so interesting, that they seem conversing with kindred spirits, and feel the sympathy of an united and harmonious family. They have one end in view, the glory of God, the name of Jesus Christ, the honour of religion, the salvation of men's souls, and the edification of the Church —objects dearer to them than life ; and which, therefore, have an influence to increase their union in love, that the one great end in view may be attained. Thus influenced, they seek each other's good, and rejoice in each other's welfare : they watch over each other ; pity and pray for one another ; mutually support and help each other up ; raise the fallen, and cheer the faint, and bend their shoulders to bear each other's burden, and *so fulfil the Law of Christ*.

This is the love of the Brethren : This is that Charity, that holy union in heart and profession, which the sacred Scriptures so much commend ; and, the contrary to which, they so much condemn, as dishonourable to God, as injurious to Christ, as ruinous to the Church, and as a fatal obstacle to the conversion of sinners and the salvation of men's souls.

It was this Charity, which united the believers in Jerusalem. All that believed were *together* ; so perfectly united, that they had all things com-

mon; being of one heart and of one soul.—This bond unites those, whom it ties together, so closely and with so much firmness, that neither the accidents of fortune, nor any of the changes and chances of this mortal life, nor any force of men or devils, nor even death itself, which ruins all other connections in the world, can loosen their union, or separate those who are thus united in Christ Jesus. But, its greatest glory consists in its tendency towards the increase and perfection of the Church, or to that perfect state, which God designed the Church shall one day attain: Not merely the perfecting the integrity of its members, whether they be many or few; but, multiplying its members, enlarging the Church, by the wide diffusion of truth throughout the world, and receiving into its bosom all the nations of the earth.

St. Paul, speaking of the Ascension of Christ, said, *When he ascended up far above all heavens, he gave* some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, *for the perfecting, uniting, or knitting together,* of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, *for the edifying, or building up, the increment, of the body of Christ:* till *we all, Jews and Gentiles, come,* meet together in the Church, *in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*—that speaking the truth *in love,* we may *grow up* into Him, increase, in *all things, every way, and in all respects,* in Him who is the Head, even Christ: From whom the *whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,* according to the effectual

effectual working in the measure of *every part*, maketh *increase of the body* unto the *Edifying of itself in love*. In this passage, the Apostle speaks of the edification of the Church towards a state of perfection, not merely by an increase of knowledge and piety in its several members, but of its *Enlargement*^b, till it shall be perfected by a general conversion of Jews and Gentiles; which happy event, he represents attainable, and to be attained, by preserving and increasing the holy union of the Saints in love. So, in his prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John, our divine Master expressed this view of the power of Charity in accomplishing the conversion of the world. He prayed *for all those that should believe in Him, that they might be ONE*, united; and, for this end, *that THE WORLD might believe that God had*

sent

^b This *enlargement* was frequently the subject of prophecy. See Isaiah xl ix. 6, 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. chap. ix. 3, 4, &c. chap. liv. 2, &c. *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* —*For thy Maker is thine husband, the LORD of Hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, THE GOD OF THE WHOLE EARTH shall He be called.*

"The Prophet has described Jerusalem, during her captivity, as a desolate woman forsaken of her husband, and bereaved of her children. Here he bids her rejoice and comfort herself after her af-

fliction, because her children should be much more numerous than they were even in her most flourishing condition. This cannot be literally spoken of the Jewish nation; which never made so noble a figure after the captivity, as in the days of David and Solomon; and therefore can only be understood of Jerusalem, as she is a type of the Christian Church, who, after her great spouse, the Son of God, was taken from her by death, and she left in a forlorn condition, her children orphans, desponding, and comfortless, yet, from such mean beginnings, she should *spread herself over the world, and will still receive a further enlargement, when the fulness of the Jews and Gentiles is come in.*"

LOWTH.

sent Him; grounding the propagation of Christianity, and the conversion of the world, upon the holy *union of his disciples and followers*.—This then is that more excellent way; more excellent than all miraculous gifts; more persuasive than the eloquence of Angels; a more instructive mis-tress to proselyte the world than the gift of prophecy; more convincing than miracles and the patient sufferings of martyrs; more useful than alms-giving; and more important than faith and hope, and all other virtues, to build up, enlarge, and perfect the Church.

Historical facts prove this. While the Church was as a city that is at unity in itself; while Christians were united, cemented together, not by what we call orthodox opinions and compulsive laws; but, compacted by the bond of Charity; the Spirit of God was with them, and gave a mighty energy to the testimony of their innocent lives. Truth was exemplified; and appeared in its heavenly simplicity; and, unincumbered with human opinions, it ran and spread abroad on all fides: It possessed the brightness and the force of lightning. Persecution could not stop its progress; but, the faster Christians were mowed down by persecutors, others sprang up in greater numbers; and, multitudes crowded every day into the Church. Neither the power of the Magistrate, nor the subtleties of philosophy, nor the deepest rooted prejudices, nor secular interests, could withstand its force, or stop its progress.

But, alas! when Christians untied the knot of Charity with their own hands—when, ambitious to pluck fruit from the tree of knowledge, they began

began to philosophize; and then to dispute for their opinions; and then, as the natural consequence, to contend who should be the greatest; the love of many waxed cold, and the bonds of charity was presently dissolved. Truth was no longer exemplified; and was scarcely heard in the confusion and strife of words: The world saw nothing in the Christian Church worthy of admiration: The Spirit of God was grieved, and departed—and, depart He ever will from a divided Church, as certainly as the soul will depart from a mangled body, torn limb from limb. From that time, the propagation of Christianity has been at a stand: No progress has been made in building the Lord's house: and, it hath been owing to our unhappy divisions, that, for many centuries, not a single nation has been converted to the Christian faith.

Some have attributed this to the absolute decree of Heaven. They suppose, it is not the sovereign will of God, that the nations should be converted; and, therefore, are not converted. But, the decree, or will, of God connects with itself a chain of causes and effects. The Church cannot be edified by any other means than those which God hath ordained; which always are the most simple, and such as have in themselves a tendency, though not an absolute power, to produce the effect which God hath mercifully designed. And, if it be the plan of the divine government, that the Church shall prosper and increase, as it faithfully preserves its union in Charity;—if Charity be the indispensable means, by which the Church shall be perfected in the conversion of Jews and Gentiles;

then,

then, the decree, or will, of God, concerning the nations, is not absolute, that they shall not be converted; but, that their conversion shall not be produced by a schismatrical spirit, and by a confusion of tongues.

There was a time, when the unity of the Church was so seriously regarded, as the will of Jesus Christ, and necessary to every one's salvation, and to the glory of God in the conversion of the heathen; that nothing was feared, nothing so much dreaded, as disunion, or separation from the Church. No one thought he could be united to Christ, who was not united to the Bishop, or Pastor; and, who did not hold communion with that body of Christians amongst whom his lot was cast. This was the ground of that exact order which distinguished the primitive societies of Christians. But, now, in this age of political and religious independency and disaffection, the Christian Church is split and divided into a thousand and a thousand contending sects and parties. Every one almost claims a liberty to do what is right in his own eyes, to quit the Church of which he is a member; into which he was initiated by baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and in which, perhaps, he has received the blessed sacrament of Christ's body and blood, the symbol of the Church's union in Charity; and, to depart into any other Church, or to set up separate meetings, under the pretence of liberty of conscience. The veryest trifles are thought sufficient to justify schism. Differences in doctrinal opinions, some improper expressions in our formalaries and creeds, or which are judged to

to be so; the very imperfections of the presiding minister, his mean or moderate abilities, his speculative errors, his frailties in practice, even the weakness of his voice, or something ungracious in his manner of delivery, are thought sufficient grounds of separation: So lightly do we think of schism! It is not considered, that, by separating from the minister, they separate from their brethren also, that is, from the Church; and, that, by separating from their brethren, they turn their backs upon that Saviour, who is in the midst of them, and rebel against the great Head of the Church, whose Laws will not, in any case, nor on any pretence whatever, allow us to tear in pieces the seamless coat of Jesus Christ, and put a stumbling-block in the way of men's salvation, prejudicing them against Christianity by the divisions and contentions of its professors.

It may be pretended that much good hath been done, by those who have separated from the Church. But, who can prove this? Who can prove that any good hath been done, reckoning up the whole sum of the matter? Who can calculate the mischief that hath been done, with all its direful effects descending upon our children and children's children! What stumbling-blocks have been cast in people's way by our unhappy divisions, and by the uncontroled licentiousness which has been the consequence of them? By the wildnesses, enthusiasm, ignorance, presumption, misconduct, of self-ordained teachers, and misguided professors! O, how much better had it been with us, if humility, modesty, meekness, submission to authority, observance, and order, the genuine

genuine concomitants of Charity, had been our distinguishing character! If, instead of leaving the Church, and building separate meeting-houses, all who had any light, any regard for the glory of God, had been united in a determined resolution to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! if, instead of rashly running out of the Church, because of some things which want amendment, they had stood between the porch and the altar, and wept over the imperfect or dilapidated state of our Jerusalem, and had lifted up their voices, and mightily cried, night and day, *Spare thy people; Good Lord, spare them;* exhibiting, at the same time, to the world, an example of the meek, and gentle, the conciliating and heavenly spirit, of the holy Jesus!—Then, most probably, we should have experienced a more important reformation than was accomplished by *Luther* and *Calvin*: the primitive spirit of Christianity would have revived, and, ere now, our Churches been filled with devout and holy Christians.

If it be said, True Christians are united in spirit, though split asunder and divided into a thousand sects and parties—I answer, This is true indeed, of all that in reality are sincere disciples of the Lord Jesus, whether they be Papists or Protestants, Churchmen or Dissenters. For, as there is one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ the only Saviour of all men, one baptism, and one faith, so the Church is one in Christ Jesus, really united in spirit, though externally divided. But, this is not the Charity, nor the Union, which the Scriptures so much command to Christians, and command

command them carefully to maintain. I must again insist, that there is another Charity, or Union, which regards the external order of particular Churches; when all Christians, sojourning in the same town, or district, come together with one accord in one place, are compacted together, have a personal intercourse and fellowship with each other; and, so live together in the same neighbourhood, that they shall be known to the world, as the disciples of Jesus Christ, by their union, and by loving one another. It is this union of Christians in the same neighbourhood, which sets the disciples as a city on an hill; or as a candle on a candlestick; making them conspicuous, and their light, increased by this union, to shine forth and illumine the dark world: and, it is in and by this union, that every part, and every member, of each particular Church receiveth nourishment and increaseth in Him who is the Head of it.

That Catholic spirit, as it is called; that general Charity, which embraces the universal Church; can never produce these effects. How can the world discern that Charity, which is every where and no where; or, which hath no determinate visible object, nor any other manifest effect than what it hath in common with absolute latitudinarianism? How can the world suppose any union, or charity, or any thing heavenly, in those who cannot meet together in one place; not for want of room, but, for want of concord! who scout at one another, as only half-enlightened, or else as ignorant and utterly destitute of the truth! How can the world pay any regard to the Bible, as the word or Revelation of God, when they see those
who

who profess to believe it contending perpetually about its meaning ! Ignorant of the true cause of our dissentions, and supposing that they originate from some obscurity or defect in the Bible, they may well say, “ Can that be the Word of God, “ given to instruct mankind, which is so uncertain, “ that, after so many ages, Christians are disputing “ about the most essential points, the most im-“ portant doctrines, which, they all pretend, are “ contained in this book ? or, can this religion be “ of God, whose professors are so much at va-“ riance, and persecute one another with such “ spiteful animosity ! ” And, what discouragement is thrown in the way of those, who are anxious to know the way of salvation, while one cries, *Lo, Here*; and another, *Lo, There*? And, what an obstacle is all this to the edification of those, who have the root of the matter in them ; while, instead of exciting them to practical godliness by the hope of eternal life, there is so much labour employed to proselyte them to human systems, and to make them zealous for some particular notions and singular forms of profession ?

There may be unity in the midst of variety, without any discord. The circumstances of one nation, city, or town, or parochial district, may occasion some variety, some difference in the form and constitution of one Church from another ; and yet, the unity of the Catholic Church shall not be broken. The members of any particular Church may be far from attaining to the same views of the Christian dispensation, and many of them be un-able to follow in the footsteps of their brethren ; and yet, in Charity, they shall all cleave together

as

as an united tribe. There is no harm in all this variety. The grievance complained of, is of another kind. It is the commencement of hostilities under the banner of the Prince of Peace. The evil is principally felt in the disagreement, the dis-sension, the division, of Christians living in the same place; when Churches are gathered out of Churches; when, in the same neighbourhood, there are more Pastors and Flocks than one, in rivalship of each other; and when the members of the same Christian family cannot be spoken of as *The Church that is in thy house*, but are divided, and belong, some to one Church, or Congregation, and some to another; things which could not happen in the primitive ages.

The Scripture distinguishes particular Churches by the limits of their position, and knows of no two Churches within the same bounds. And, if the bond of Charity had not been dissolved; if the commandments of Christ and His Apostles had been observed, there would not, and there could not, be more than one Bishop, or Pastor, or Ruling Elder, call him which you will, and, no more than one flock, or one Church, in the same town or neighbourhood. Christians might be so numerous in the same town or neighbourhood, that they could not all meet together in the same place: and then, the one Bishop, or Shepherd of this numerous flock, would be obliged to have co-pastors and fellow-elders to assist him, and to attend one part of his flock, while he, perhaps with other assistants, ministered to another part in another place. But still, the Church in this one town, or neighbourhood, would be *one Church*: the Co-

Pastors and Fellow-Elders, and all the private Christians, in this one town, or neighbourhood, would be under the inspection of their Bishop ; and would, in various ways, maintain communion with him and with one another. This is essentially different from what we now see : for, in the same town, and in the same neighbourhood, there shall be three or four Pastors or Ministers, Churches or Flocks, totally unconnected with each other ; and, as much in opposition to each other, as three or four assemblies of Jews, Turks, and Gentoos, can be. This is what the Scripture absolutely prohibits ; and, what Charity most abhors.

If Science were the object of the Christian dispensation ; if it had been our Saviour's design to stuff our heads with opinions philosophically exact ; if He had come into the world to give us a perfect ritual, and to establish a perfect form of worship in solemn temples ; then, it would have been necessary, that the union of Christians should depend on their apprehending the same truths and viewing them in the same light, and on their repeating the same creed ; and then, all particular Churches would have observed one and the same form of external religion. But, whereas the design of the Christian dispensation was, to communicate a new and spiritual life tending towards perfection, and to call forth the proper acts of this spiritual life in a course of trial and probation, and to exemplify it in the holy associations of Christ's disciples and followers—a life essentially different from the life of sense and reason derived from the earthly Adam—a life totally independent of speculative science, and not necessarily connected with right

right and clear apprehensions even of the doctrines of Revelation, nor necessarily connected with any particular form of external religion—therefore, the unity of the Church consists in an union of Christians in Charity ; and not in opinion, nor in the establishment of one regimen, and the same rites and ceremonies in all congregations.

Who, that knows any thing of the primitive Church, can doubt, whether a Heathen, renouncing his idolatry, and acknowledging the one living and true God, and that Jesus Christ was a Prophet sent from God to reform mankind ; that is, one who believed no more than *Socinus* taught ; would have been denied baptism, or not received into the bosom of the Church ? He might, perhaps, have been placed among the Catechumens^c, in hope of his attaining to a more perfect understanding, and *to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ* : but still, he would have been regarded as a brother : he would not have been rejected, nor excommunicated, because of his imperfect faith. If indeed this man expressed a turbulent spirit ; if he assumed the character of dictator ; if he were guilty of seditious, treasonable, and schismatical practices ; had openly accused the Church of idolatry, because it believed more than he himself could yet acknowledge ; and, had boasted of his having laid combustible matter to destroy the Church ; he would be looked upon as a monster, or something

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worse ;

^c He could not have been classed with the heathen, because he had renounced idolatry, and believed in the one living and true God ; and he could not have been classed with the Jews, because he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was that Prophet that should come into the world.

worse ; and, after ineffectual admonitions, would very justly have been excluded from the Church, which, at that time, was feared as a certain prelude to eternal excision from the kingdom of our Lord Jesus.—But, this punishment of exclusion would not have been inflicted upon this man for his opinions, which were right, so far as they went ; but, for his unchristian spirit, for his obstinate *contempt* of what he did *not* believe, and for his disorderly practices. And, if the Church would not, and could not, exclude a member for the mere imperfection of his attainments in knowledge, consistently with the nature of the Church's union in Charity, most certainly it cannot be thought, nor ought to be thought, a sufficient reason to justify any member, or members of a Church, in seceding from its communion, merely because that Church holds some doctrines, to which that member, or those members, cannot accede. If what is here stated be true, it will prove that the unity of the Church depends less than hath been supposed on right opinions, and consists in Charity altogether.

Compulsive Laws may drive us together, but cannot unite us. Imperial and Papal Edicts, the Decrees of Councils, Acts of Uniformity, and the Sword of the Magistrate, may aggravate, but cannot cure, the evil of Schism. Can a cure be hoped from prescriptions, which have been a principal cause of the disease ? Fruitless attempts have been made, to establish such an union and concord as God never designed ; to make all particular Churches in the same kingdom, and all national Churches, and the whole Christian world, of one lip

lip or confession of faith, and to produce an uniformity of opinion and worship^d, in the great Babel, which man hath built, and not God: but, confusion, disorder, and separation, have been the fatal consequence. By imposing creeds and confessions and forms of worship, that is, by multiplying terms of communion, we infallibly make dissenters: for, though nothing be imposed, but what may well consist with the essentials of Christianity, some good Christians, and many who are not good Christians, will think these impositions an intolerable burden, from which they cannot relieve themselves in any other way than by seceding from our communion; and, right or wrong, they will think themselves justified by the necessity of the case in doing so. And, when this mischief has increased to a considerable degree, we find ourselves under the sad necessity of permitting our fences to be trodden down, to invent distinctions by which the articles of our faith may be accommodated to every ones fancy, and to tolerate by law that very evil which our impositions were designed to prevent. But, if this necessity had not existed; if the terms of communion had not been multiplied; an Act of Toleration, to permit opposing congregations in the same town and neighbourhood, would have appeared to be, what it really is, as inconsistent with Charity, and with the laws of Jefus Christ, as the making an Act of Parliament to dissolve the *vinculum matrimonii*, and to tolerate adulterers.

The evil which I have described, like the leprosy, is too inveterate to be cured by human art.

It

^d Even to the worshipping God, by all nations, in the *same language*.

It may be utterly incurable—It *may* be—Yet, there is a peradventure of hope. Our secularity and profaneness, our hypocrisies and superstition, our animosities and divisions, may increase, and they are increasing, till the world shall be provoked to rise up against us, and persecute the very name of that holy religion, which we have so much perverted and disgraced. Unsound professors will then drop off, as leaves in autumn—Faithful Christians will endure the fiery trial—The wood, hay, straw, stubble, which have divided and deformed the Church, will be burnt up—The truth and simplicity of the Gospel will remain intire—and, Christians, who, now, like sheep in a large pasture, looking contrary ways, are separated from each other, will then, like sheep, if a dog or wolf enter the pasture, *close* side by side, and be united again in the bond of Charity. The Churches will then appear in their primitive glory; and, Truth, recovering her energy, will spread abroad and sanctify the nations.

But, who can tell that so much mercy remains to us! Perhaps, the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled; or, the end of their dispensation nearly approaching, when, for our great unfaithfulness, we, in our turn, shall be broken off from the olive tree—when God will turn His mercy to His ancient people, still beloved for their Father's sake, and graft them in again; and, who may afterwards become the instruments of Providence to convert all the nations of the earth.

Yet, however desperate the disease, it is our duty to give faithful warning. Individuals may learn wisdom; may study to be quiet, to walk orderly,

orderly, to avoid contention, and to live peaceably with all men.—Let us seriously consider, how far we are fallen below the spirit of Christianity; and, what little we possess of that *Charity which edifieth*. O, reflect, how injurious to the Church, and to the world, is our want of union! and, how hateful strife and divisions must be in His sight, who is *the God of peace and love!* How great must be the offence of exposing His religion —of exposing the Son of God Himself—to the contempt and disbelief of the world!!

Unpropitious as the circumstances of the times are to the interests of Christianity, they are not yet so bad as to preclude utterly the exercise of this divine virtue—*Charity never faileth*. The Christian spirit is conciliating : It is a yielding and uniting spirit. It will incline us to accommodate ourselves, as much as possible, to those who differ from us : It will conform to their prejudices in things indifferent, and in those especially which are matters of mere opinion, and which are human constitutions. Such was the conduct of St. Paul : *I have made myself servant unto all men, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law; to them that are weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak : I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* This was Charity indeed : and, this same Charity, which sought to unite to itself and save men of such different complexions,

plexions, now, when dissensions abound, if it cannot heal the breach, will, like a lenient ointment, or an emollient plaister, assuage the inflammation, and prevent the fretting of that grievous wound which hath divided and weakened and deformed the Churches.

The hope of reconciling religious differences by syllogisms is a vain presumption. Argument can do nothing here. Its strength, though equal to mathematical demonstration, will give no advantage to us, in an attempt to re-unite a divided Church. The strongest arguments of controversialists are regarded as the strokes of an enemy, or felt as a probe rudely thrust into a wound by some unskilful hand, and often prove a burning caustic, which inflames the sore, enlarges and deepens the wound. There is no other method left us of mitigating the evil, than pursuing that charitable, that conciliating conduct, which I wish to recommend. Nothing can be so effectual, to persuade men into a suspicion that they needlessly dissent from our communion, as exhibiting the graces of the Christian character in that form of profession against which they have been unfortunately prejudiced. If it fail to remove their prejudices, it will moderate the violence of them. They will see, that they have nothing to fear, and much to hope from our love : and, they will be obliged to speak of us in that glorious and honourable language, which the probity, the innocence, and goodness, of the primitive Christians drew from the mouths of the heathen, when they said, Such a one is a good man, and there is nothing to blame in him, excepting only that he is a Christian.

It

It is far from my intention to recommend a careless indifference in view of the disorders of the Church. No :—It becomes us to feel that deep concern, which was repeatedly expressed in the song of *Deborah for the divisions of Reuben*. But, consistently with the most awful apprehensions of the evil of Schism, we may, and ought, to exercise the greatest moderation towards those who dissent from our modes of faith and forms of external regimen, to express a friendliness of disposition, a gentleness and brotherly-kindness towards them as Christians. Charity will not say, These are not of my communion, and therefore deserve no favour. This is the language of a party-spirit, of pride and selfishness. Christians, who respect the glory of God, the service of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of souls, will be good to all, and disdain none whom God hath made ; and, will account every one a neighbour, though he be a Samaritan, a Jew, a Turk, or an Heathen—it matters not what he is, so he be a man. How much more then ought the Charity of Christians to embrace all, though differing from them in various degrees and manners, who profess to be the servants of the same God and the disciples of the same merciful and gracious Saviour !

It is worthy of remark, upon this occasion, that the man who, in the Corinthian Church, said, *I am of Christ*, was as carnal as they, who said, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas*. We may be as much under the influence of a sectarian spirit *within* the Church, as they, who, in fondness for their private opinions, dissent from our communion : and, this is certainly the case,

when our zeal is not directed to the common interests of Christianity, that is, when we are more zealous to make *Church-men*, than to make men good Christians.—Highly as we prize the privileges and advantages of our ecclesiastical establishment, and justly too; we should remember, there are other privileges and advantages of infinitely greater importance, which demand a prior regard and a more intense affection. Charity issues from God: It is derived to us through the wounds of our crucified Redeemer; who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, that He might unite them all in Himself, as Head over all, and reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. And, if that Charity, which issues from God, the Father of all, influence us; if God have given us of *His* Spirit, it will excite us to pursue, in the first place, that grand object of the divine compassions—that, which was, and is, and shall be, the eternal purpose of mercy—that, for which the Son of God poured forth His precious blood—viz. to rescue men from the most imminent danger of eternal ruin; to raise them up above the condition of this worthless life of nature; to quicken their souls to the enjoyment of that spiritual life, that glorious liberty, which will set the poorest beggar and the unemancipated slave above the condition of princes; and, when perfected, render them equal to the Angels of God in heaven.

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But, that orthodoxy, or learning, which can overlook such mercy as this, and will bear no contradiction, in its zeal for the inferior interests of a party,

party, is most uncharitable, and incompatible with the divine wisdom. This wisdom, mild and gracious as the face of heaven itself, is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits ; without *partiality*, and without hypocrisy ; and the fruit of righteousness is sown *in peace* of them that make peace. It is love that melts the hearts of men, and blends them together.—Return, thou heavenly Spirit, and visit this distracted world ! And, may we not hope, dear Brethren, that when Philosophers, and Politicians, and other enthusiasts, shall have proved the vanity of their schemes, Charity will again compose the Church, and produce an universal fraternization. In the mean while, let us pursue, as we can, this most excellent way ; and approve ourselves the Ministers of Christ, by long suffering, by kindness, and by love unsignified.

F I N I S.

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(Dedicated to the LORD BISHOP OF LONDON)

A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

LEARNING AND INSPIRATION

OF THE

APOSTLES.

ERRATA.

Preface, p. 5, in the note, *voluntary*, r. *voluntarily*.

6, l. 20, *ducant*, r. *ducunt*.

8, l. 6, for *gentlemen*, r. *gentleman*.

8, l. 22, *property*, r. *poverty*.

22, l. 15, *condem*, r. *condemn*.

25, in the note, *disposed*, r. *dispersed*.

Page 11, l. 31, *fortuitous*, r. *fortuitous*.

20, l. 10, *valient*, r. *valiant*.

28, l. 5, *objeſt*, r. *objection*.

49, l. 26, *in correctly*, r. *incorrectly*.

53, in the note, *Hamborough*, r. *Hamburg*.

105, l. 5, *more*, r. *mere*.

141, l. 10, *And, a great*, r. *A great*.

142, l. 1, *were*, r. *was*.

176, l. 27, *Bath-Rol.* r. *Bath-Kol.*

177, l. 1, *proposition of*, r. *proposition or*.

206, l. 33, *This design*, r. *His design*.

256, l. 4, *And endiſſe*, r. *An endiſſe*.

259, l. 8, *left be found*, r. *left be be found*.

272, l. 29, *thſe*, r. *theſe*.

281, l. 21, *Ye ſhall be*, r. *He ſhall be*.

315, l. 1, *ſo that*, r. *ſo ſhall*.

325, l. 19, *witout any*, r. *with any*.

331, l. 4, *bonds*, r. *bond*.

332, last line, *formalaries*, r. *formularies*.

229, l. 15, *ſalvation*, r. *Revelation*.

247, l. 29, *them*, r. *Him*.

327, l. 4, *love another*, r. *love one another*.

DISSEMINATION
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